

Mexican Women: The Anatomy of a Stereotype in a Mestizo Village

By

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the  
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MEXICAN WOMEN: THE ANATOMY OF A STEREOTYPE IN A MESTIZO VILLAGE

By

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This study focuses specifically on an area of Mexican culture which has been largely of peripheral concern to anthropologists: the status and roles of Mexican peasant women. While Mexico has been the locus of more anthropological research than any other Latin American country, there is a void in the literature regarding women. One purpose of this research was to supplement and reinterpret the literature regarding women, with an analysis of the feminine contribution to the social fabric. The research was conducted in a typical, highland, mestizo village.

The roles of women are described with emphasis on socialization-- women as socializers and as the recipients of socialization. Maturation is seen as a process encompassing a number of years and socialization in the areas of religion, economics, and physiology is described in terms of when the female receives cultural information and from whom. It is demonstrated that marriage does not mark the achievement of adult status; rather adulthood is truly ascribed when a woman is able to achieve the position of mater familias. Attention is also focused upon women, such as spinsters, who do not follow the typical life cycle.

In addition, religious, economic, and political roles of women are discussed, with emphasis on the importance of the life cycle in determining the type of participation available to, and practiced by, women. It is seen that the roles which women play demand a degree of cooperation not generally reported in the literature regarding peasants.

Finally, although rural mestizo women in Latin America have been described largely in terms of passivity and self-denial (and it has been argued that any divergence from these ideals can be explained solely as deviance), this research indicates that not only is deviance from ideal behavior common, but that the majority of such divergence is patterned. Situations are discussed in which a woman is expected to assume the characteristics of a gallona (female rooster; aggressive woman) in order to protect her own honor, that of her husband, or that of her family. Such behavior represents cultural responses to a variety of situations, particularly the avoidance of face-to-face conflict between males which may result in homicide. Since situational aggressive behavior by women is expected, it can, therefore, not be termed "deviant."

Thus this study suggests contradictions and reinterpretations of the ethnographic literature regarding rural Latin American women.

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

This study focuses specifically on an area of Mexican culture which has been of only peripheral concern to anthropologists: the status and roles of Mexican peasant women. The need for such investigations has been recognized as high priority research by several scholars, including Melville Jacobs (1964:190-191) and June Nash (1970:637).

While Mexico has been the locus of more anthropological research than any other country in Latin America, there is a void in the literature regarding women. A perusal of the literature demonstrates the void. Descriptions of compadrazgo (see, for example, Mintz and Wolf 1950), machismo (any general ethnography), donship (Romano V. 1960), and the mayordomía-cargo system (Cancian 1965) give, at best, but brief mention of the relation of women to the function and perpetuation of these phenomena. Therefore, one purpose of this study is to supplement and reinterpret the literature regarding mestizo women, with an analysis of the feminine contribution to the social fabric.

In general, rural women in Latin America have been described ethnographically in terms of passivity and self-denial. By far the majority of the anthropological literature argues that the ideals of women's behavior include self-abnegation and a submissive attitude in relation to men. Women have been shown, by Diaz-Guerrero (1955) and others, to have a great and enduring tie with their sons due to

the quality of husband-wife relationships. While both Foster (1967:59) and Lewis (1951:319) have remarked that some women diverge from these patterns, they have explained such divergence merely in terms of a lack of correspondence between the ideals of passivity and real behavior, implying that any dissonance can be understood solely as a departure from ideal behavior.

It is hypothesized here that women's roles have been misunderstood. While it will be shown that some women do depart from these so-called ideals, often this can be understood in terms of varying ideals, according to the situation. As Chapple (1970:272) has pointed out, by defining behavior in terms of "role," the cultural and interactional realities are often obscured and the realization must be made that cultural situations require different patterns of interaction. Thus, in considering women, we must also describe their movements in time and space, showing how a variety of situations call for behavior which does not correlate exactly with the ideal of passivity.

In order to understand the stereotype presented of women heretofore, one must examine the reasons for its widespread acceptance. Little attention has been focused specifically on women; as Pescatello (1972:125) points out, "Despite analyses of political and military elites, students, peasants, blacks, and immigrants, little scholarly work has been undertaken on man's 'other,' the female." Hammond and Jablow (1973:1) have suggested that the lack of data on females can at least partially be explained by the preponderance of male writers, arguing that, "the terms human and masculine came to be almost synonymous...even with the advent of modern social science, the masculine orientation persists."



One of the most obvious reasons for the lack of concentration upon women has been the difficulty of obtaining such data by males. The nature of Latin American social structure inhibits collection of data regarding women, especially in terms of real behavior, and the difficulty of researching "female culture" has been remarked upon by various observers.<sup>1\*</sup> Redfield and Villa Rojas (1964:68) also have noted, "as in so many places, in Chan Kom a woman's sphere is about the home and her activities are always private; whereas a man is occupied in the field and forest and his activities are often public." The typical male investigator is privy primarily to statements of static ideal behavior and the perception of women's roles as seen through the eyes of indigenous males and marginal females. It would be difficult, if not impossible, for a male researcher to study the real behavior of women.

Moreover, women anthropologists who have carried on field research in Mexico have also neglected the role of women. June Nash (1967) has analyzed witchcraft and homicide in an Indian village; Claudia Madsen (1968), folk medicine; Laura Nader (1964), Indian social organization and law; Lola Schwartz (1962), conflict and violence; while Elsie Clews Parsons (1966) and May Diaz (1966) have completed more traditional community studies. These women have had access to material unavailable to male researchers; for example, Diaz (1966:88) notes that in Tonalá women are often the actual household head while men claim this to be utterly groundless. Yet in order to understand their lack of focus upon women one must consider the

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\* Notes are included at the conclusion of each chapter.

intellectual climate which characterized American scholarship until recent years--a concept which might be inferred from the nature of male-female roles in the United States. To be a professional, a woman was always expected to prove that she could do a "man's job." The female anthropologist was required to study and investigate areas which would prove her worth as a professional; these areas almost invariably were prescribed by what men had researched. Thus the woman in the field found herself spending much time with men and could devote little attention to the study of women's behavior.

#### Selection of the Community

The selection of the village chosen for this study, Cajititlán, Jalisco, Mexico, was no random choice, for axiomatic to much traditional ethnography is the proposition that the researcher must investigate the total community, analyzing the functional dependencies of the varying institutions. Therefore if one wishes to focus upon a limited aspect of the social system, it is helpful to have at one's disposal an ethnography which outlines the basic characteristics of the community at hand; Nunez (1963a) has completed such a study for Cajititlán.

More importantly, however, is the fact that women's passivity has often been seen as a complementary aspect of male machismo (Nash 1970:638). If this is indeed the case, then in an area which greatly elaborates the cult of machismo one would expect to find women who conform more readily to the passive role which is reported in most community studies. Therefore to test the hypothesis that women's behavior is not entirely determined by the passivity ideal, an area with extreme elaboration of machismo seemed to be a better choice than

an area in which the phenomenon is more muted, such as a village with a high residue of Indian cultural patterns. As Nunez (1963a:118) reports, Jalisco in general and Cajititlán in particular, both evidence a high incidence of real manifestations of the ideals of machismo.

### The Village

Cajititlán is situated on a lake shore, located thirty-two kilometers from the state capital, Guadalajara. Although it existed as an Indian community before Spanish conquest, it is today a typical highland mestizo village. In no one's memory or even recollections of tales told by present-day old people's grandparents, was any language spoken but Spanish. The Cajititlences are conscious of their Indian heritage and sometimes refer to themselves as "inditos" (little Indians) in a self-deprecating manner, particularly when talking about the very educated of the city.

Although Cajititlán owes its municipal loyalty to the county seat at Tlajomulco, relationships between the two villages have always been remote and little thought is given, or few trips taken, to Tlajomulco, which is difficult to reach, particularly during the rainy season. Thus, Cajititlán has a long tradition of political autonomy.

Rurales (rural police) were introduced to the community in the early 1960's and were the first effective, modern-day, outside law enforcement known to the community. They attempted to depistolize the village and were somewhat successful for it is rare to see a man openly carrying a gun on the streets. However the effect of the rurales has been to encourage men to hide guns under their belt

buckles, and not necessarily to stop carrying them altogether. Moreover it is apparently thought that Cajititlán is now successfully "civilized" since the rurales are absent from the community for months at a time. During the period from September, 1971, to December, 1972, rurales were in the village only five months. So Cajititlán has been able to regain much of the political autonomy characteristic of the pre-1960's era. There is now a movement afoot to create a new municipio (county) with Cajititlán at its head. As Nunez (1963b:348) has pointed out, "social control is a function of the church and public opinion rather than of police or political authority."

The village, with a population of approximately 1800 with 350 households,<sup>2</sup> is a typical highland, peasant community. Corns and beans are the major crops and most men identify themselves as workers of the land; fishing forms a means of livelihood for a few, although water hyacinths sometimes clog the lake and cause a decline in the fishing. Most other male occupations can be classed as "service" positions to the community and are often part-time endeavors, such as baking and blacksmithing. Cajititlences retain a reverence for the land and are proud of the ejido system which has, as one woman put it, "made patrones [in this case, autonomous individuals] of us all." Like other highland and peasant communities, Cajititlán is a nucleated settlement, built around a plaza; the fields are located away from the settlement itself.

Peasant communities never exist in a vacuum and always retain a relationship with the city, in this case, Guadalajara. Guadalajara has always been linked to Cajititlán by burro or horseback, but in

1960, a graded road was completed making Guadalajara much more accessible. Ten years ago this road was paved and a local bus cooperative now runs four buses a day to Cajititlán. The links between city and village were further cemented by the advent of Mexican tourists into the town; they purchased lots along the lake shore and often visit the community on weekends. Cajititlán is by no means isolated from the city world. There are now fifty-five television sets in the village which bring the life of the city into the village; the Cajititlences tend to believe that the soap operas and other programs represent the reality of life of the urban rich. Folk tales are often used as morality lessons and now villagers also employ stories from the soap operas as examples of what happens to evil or cunning people. The city is still viewed with distrust and the behavior of the city folk who visit the community is distasteful to the majority of the local residents; the urban children are thought to be unruly and disrespectful and parents fear that their own children might be subject to untoward influences.

Thus, although Cajititlán has been subject to a number of outside influences in recent years, the villagers cling tenaciously to their traditional life and values. They welcome the trappings of the city and women are particularly thankful for electric irons and gas stoves; yet they remain suspicious that the morals of the catrines (city-slickers) are somehow poorer than their own.

#### The Format

One of the most difficult tasks facing the anthropologist is the presentation of his data in a manner which will be both understandable

and readable. In The Little Community (1969), Robert Redfield discusses various methods which can be used such as an analysis of the social structure or a typical biography, and concludes that the method of presentation is not as crucial as the end result--how the whole of the community is presented to the reader.

In this manuscript, the approach employed is that of the life cycle. As Moore (1973:2-3) has recently pointed out, this concept is not new to anthropology and has long been viewed as a "thing," described in linear form. Thus the life of the individual is viewed chronologically with attempts on the part of the writer to separate various periods of life and to limit his discussion to the events characteristic of each age. As Moore has stated,

...these various ages of man spin off from the meshing--as of gears--of a number of differently timed human life cycles coexisting within particular communities. The ages of man spin off from the intricate cycling of three generations at once. The coming into existence of a generation also creates generational statuses and life crises further up the line. Birth and the various ceremonies that mark it, such as baptism, must bear the weight of at least two higher generations, whose status is thereby changed.

Thus, in the description of the life cycle to follow, one sees not only the typical events of the varying stages of life but how these affect the roles and activities of others within the context of the household and the community. The chapter on early life, for example, does not limit itself solely to a discussion of the activities of children, but focuses upon the variety of female socializers who influence the child, be they older sisters, mothers, or schoolteachers.

In order to make this presentation more vivid and understandable to the reader, the technique employed involves the use of composite

vignettes of typical days in the lives of individuals as a vehicle out of which the elements of life can be analyzed. Thus the reader is introduced to three families from which one can discern varieties in house type, household structure and the ethnographic details of women's activities. Each typical day is analyzed from the point of view of the main actor who represents a different time of life.

The first of these is Cuca Hernández who resides in a one-room dwelling, built around a dirt compound, with a lean-to kitchen. She is nine years old and lives with her nuclear family--her mother, her father, her brothers Chema and Beto, and her nine-month-old sister, Luz. This type of family arrangement is quite common in Cajititlán, particularly when a couple achieves a full complement of children. Cuca, at nine, is in the last stages of childhood, for children of ten years of age start to exhibit characteristics of adolescents in their activities.

Rosí Rodriguez, the second character, is sixteen years of age. At fifteen, a girl in Cajititlán is considered to be of an age where courtship is expected and, perhaps, marriage will soon follow; it will become clear, however, that such a girl is not considered socially adult. She, too, lives in a typical household of an extended nuclear family type. Her older brother, Jorge, has recently married and he and his wife share the household with Rosí, her two younger brothers, and her parents. Her house has two rooms and a kitchen shared by all family members; the economic contributions of Rosí, Jorge, her mother and her father have allowed the family to improve upon the basic one-room house.

Finally, consideration is given to another type of family, that of doña Lidia Morales, a fifty-year-old woman. Her house has a formal tiled breezeway, three rooms, and two kitchens. She lives with her husband, don Miguel, and her unmarried son, Rafael. The compound is also shared by another son, Benito, and his wife and child; they have a separate kitchen. She also has two married daughters who do not live with her but who are often present in the house.

These three families demonstrate the development of a cycle within the domestic group, resulting in the spinning-off of new nuclear families from extended family groupings.

Oscar Lewis (1959:18) has argued that the presentation of a typical day in the life of the family is a valid approach to the understanding of social systems. With the use of such a technique one sees not only the events of one day, but some of the earlier influences upon the informant's life. In this manner, such a presentation is similar to the life history methods employed by Dollard (1938), Radin (1926), and others. Due to the limitations in time and scope of the composite vignette method it more nearly approaches the ethnographic profiles utilized by Warner and Lunt (1941).

There are major differences, however, between the present approach and those mentioned above, with more similarity to the use of such material by Warner and Lunt. Warner and Lunt profiled various community members in Yankee City, these being used as illustrative of activities and people within the community; however the profiles stood apart and little effort was made to co-join the rest of the



material with the profiles. Typical life histories and Oscar Lewis' theoretically earlier approach of using the typical day as a tool, require that the reader draw conclusions from the life experiences of a few members of a community. In the present method, the composite vignettes are used as vehicles from which various elements can be drawn out and seen to be characteristic of women's behavior in general. Thus each day is followed by a discussion of the variety of activities, events, and critical episodes found therein.

The other major difference in this approach is that while life histories are presented of actual individuals, the composite vignette characters are fictionalized. While all events and personnel are valid in terms of cultural norms, they do not represent the lives of any one individual; thus although doña Lidia's strained relationship with her daughter-in-law is entirely typical and their responses are culturally patterned, there is no doña Lidia. The decision to use this approach arises from the recent work of Barnes (1963) and others who have been concerned with the ethical problems confronting the modern-day researcher and how he can best protect his informants. By presenting bits and pieces of many lives in Cajititlán, no one can be offended for no one will be able to recognize himself. Other illustrative material of a personal nature found in the body of the discussions is similarly scrambled.

It might be argued that such scrambling results in a distortion of real cultural events and personalities. That is, in presenting no one's reality, no reality is present. The events marking the days of the characters to follow are nevertheless typical. Moreover,

Robert Redfield (1969:166) has demonstrated that any attempt to present ethnographic reality results in portraiture. He concludes that since this is the case, "the work of historians and indeed of novelists will not be entirely irrelevant to me." Although the composite vignette method is, in a sense, a novelistic approach, it is separated from the camp of fiction for it represents a means of presenting ethnographic detail in the context of movement through space and time. We do not merely learn of laundering techniques but see how such activity is integrated into daily patterns; we learn not only that children do this or that but how these actions are ordered in a time sequence.

Besides presenting chapters on early life, adolescence, and adulthood, with accompanying daily routines, one chapter is devoted to pregnancy, childbirth, and early infant care. These events are considered by women to be extremely important and are also significant in terms of the changes that they mark in the status of women.

In the concluding chapter, a summary of the achievement of adulthood is presented, as well as a summary of divergence from ideal roles. Events in the life cycle, marked by ceremonies such as baptism, marriage, and death are analyzed as a means of demonstrating regulating principles in the life of women--segregation by sex and cooperation. Finally it is demonstrated that all non-passive behavior by women cannot be explained merely in terms of divergence from ideal patterns but that other factors, mainly situational, must be taken into account.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See, for example, Nunez (1963a:119) who writes about his problems in gathering data on women: "One factor which must be taken into account...is...that the researcher, being male, had considerably less opportunity to observe and interact with women."

<sup>2</sup>The statistical data of this study were collected in a town census carried out by this researcher and two field assistants. Marriage records were made available by the town mayor.

## CHAPTER TWO

### EARLY LIFE

#### Vignette One

The church bells, signaling that early mass will soon begin, awaken María de Refugio (Cuca) Hernández; she crawls from her petate (straw mat) bed, being careful not to awaken her brothers, Jose María (Chema), eleven, and Roberto (Beto), three, who share the bed next to hers. She has slept in her slip and pulls her dress on, stepping into her sandals beside the bed. For Cuca, another day has begun.

Outside she hears the stirrings of early morning and runs to the kitchen where her mother stands at the hearth making tortillas. Cuca has not yet mastered this art but begs bits of masa (corn meal) from her mother to practice. Cuca's father, holding the nine-month-old, Luz, looks on, teasing Cuca. Yet she takes pride in the fact that she has advanced somewhat for, not too long ago, her efforts were invariably fed to the pigs. She still must endure some teasing within the family for her tortillas, instead of being round and light, are lumpy and ill-shaped; the Cajititlences refer to these poor facsimiles as huaraches (sandals) but all realize that tortilla-making takes much practice.

Her activity is short-lived, however, because her mother tells her to start her daily chores; Cuca grumblingly agrees although she would prefer to stay in the warmth of the kitchen. She finds the broom, hidden in a corner of the kitchen, and begins to sweep out the

dirt compound, pushing the debris onto an old metal Pepsi-Cola sign which she empties into a vacant lot across from the house. This finished, she fills a bucket from the house's only faucet and sprinkles the earth floor with water to keep down the dust.

She can hear Beto and Chema now playing and tussling in the bedroom. She enters the room, where the whole family sleeps, and finding trousers and a shirt helps Beto get dressed. Her mother calls and she scurries to learn what she wants; Cuca must go to the local café and buy a half a kilo of chicken. Carrying a metal plate she sets out for the several block walk, greeting those she passes and stopping to chat with one of her cousins. Today she carries no money for the chicken must be bought on credit but Cuca has been conducting money transactions since she was four years of age; now, at nine, she knows what everything costs and how much change to expect.

The chicken bought, Cuca hurries home to breakfast on beans and tortillas and change her clothes for school. Today is Monday and the school uniform, a blue skirt and overblouse, with a white blouse, must be worn, each and every Monday. She attends the state school for girls and is in the third grade, after having spent two years in the first grade; Chema is in the fourth grade at the boy's school.

The family eats hurriedly and her father leaves for his fields. Cuca rapidly washes the dishes in the lavadero (a wash basin), using cold water and a stiff brush. She runs to change her clothes for school starts at 8:00 a.m.; there is no clock in her house but she can

hear other children as they pass by her house on the way to school. Grabbing her plastic bag, filled with the books supplied by the government, she calls a good-bye to her mother and younger siblings and sets off for school.

She meets her school companions along the way and, laughing and chatting, they form quite an entourage by the time they reach the plaza, by which the girl's school is located. The bell rings just as Cuca and her friends arrive and there is a mad scramble to get to the classrooms and into the seats. Cuca's teacher, a young woman who commutes from Guadalajara, calls the class to order but it is a few minutes before the class of thirty-four girls settles down. The night before all were to have memorized a portion of one of their texts which deals with the life of Benito Juárez; the teacher asks if all are prepared and no one indicates that she has not learned her lesson. The teacher, leading the class, begins to recite the lesson; few join in but the short paragraph is practiced until all are loudly chanting the lesson along with the teacher. Then the teacher asks questions about the material; when Cuca is called upon she rises and gives the correct answer, feeling proud of herself, and knowing that the class would have laughed had she been wrong.

The teacher then begins to put long-division problems on the blackboard and each student is told to copy the problems in her notebook, and to solve each one. While working on the problems, Cuca cannot resist the temptation of talking with her seat-mate, Elisa, and the teacher scolds them; Elisa and Cuca are made to stand beside their seats and are told that they must work the problems at home

that night. Cuca worries for she fears that her monthly report card in which they are graded on application, conduct, and cleanliness, will reflect this reprimand. She is soon saved from the punishment, for at eleven o'clock the bell for recess is rung. The teachers all congregate in another classroom and set out a table filled with sweets; Cuca buys four pieces of candy with her veinte (a twenty-cent piece, worth under two cents, U.S. currency), and runs outside to play with other students. She joins a circle game playing with pupils from all the grades; some girls run around aimlessly while others sit quietly and sew. Although the recess is to last but thirty minutes, Cuca and the other students realize that often the teachers enjoy their chances at conversation and therefore recess often stretches to an hour, which is the case today.

When the bell rings again, the children line up according to grades; this takes some time and Cuca and Rosita take advantage of this to push and shove each other. Then the school director announces that they will practice the Mexican National Anthem, which they do until twelve forty; the director leads and makes the students go over various parts several times until she seems satisfied with the results. Now only twenty minutes remain of school for the day; Cuca, along with her class, returns to the schoolroom where the teacher gives them their assignments for the next day. The bell rings and the students are dismissed, all running from the building.

Cuca, still remembering the scolding she suffered earlier, does not dawdle on her way home, as is her custom. Her mother does not even have to tell her to change her clothes today as she often

does. Chema quickly changes too and goes out to play while Beto cries to go with him. Chema shakes Beto's hold upon his pants' leg and runs out the door, yelling back that Beto is too young to play with him. Cuca consoles Beto with the fact that she will play lotería (a lottery game similar to Bingo) with him, quickly setting out the cards and beans used as markers; she must help Beto play the game since he still cannot recognize all of the pictured animals and fruits by name.

Soon, however, Cuca's mother calls her to set the table and help prepare the midday meal; her father has taken his meal with him to the fields and is not home. Cuca, after finishing these chores, is sent to find Chema who is playing at lassoing a dog while riding a stick horse down the street from the house. The meal, consisting of rice, chicken stew, and tortillas, is eaten quickly, while Chema teases Cuca about her boyfriends; Cuca denies having such ties and states uncategorically that she will never marry. Her mother laughs at the uncomfortableness shown by Cuca, but does not enter in.

After the meal, Chema again leaves the house to play while Cuca clears the table and washes the dishes; Luz is played with by her mother while Beto hangs around his mother's knee. Cuca returns to play with both Beto and Luz and is allowed to hold Luz for a time. All then follow the mother into the bedroom for Luz needs changing; although Cuca cannot accomplish this task as quickly as her mother, she begs to do the changing. At first her mother demurs but finally relents and Cuca busies herself with this task while Beto runs between Luz and the mother, trying to call attention to himself.



It is October and each weekday of this month finds the church bells signaling classes in Catholic doctrine around four o'clock. All the children in Cuca's family attend these classes except Luz, although Cuca and Chema have already made their first communions and Beto is too young to learn much. It is common for a child to attend these classes at four years of age but Beto has lately been allowed to go with Cuca. Upon hearing the bells, Cuca's mother reacts quickly, telling Cuca to wash her face and hands and those of her brother, and to be careful to wet her ear lobes, thus avoiding a cold. While Cuca does this, the mother again runs to the door to call for Chema, who reluctantly returns to the house. Cuca and Beto set off for the classes, held in the parochial school, a few minutes before Chema, who arrives late. Beto accompanies Cuca to a class for post-first communion children, the same class to which Chema now runs. Classes are held every Thursday, except for October, and Chema wishes to attend during this month since each attendance is rewarded by a ticket which he can use at the end of the month to buy food and drink at a fair. The children are chanting the responses to the catechism, and Chema adds his voice to that of his sister and all the others in the room. The class is dismissed in about an hour, the children growing progressively more restless as the class continues, exhibiting the same restlessness with which the class commenced.

Cuca and Beto return to the house while Chema again goes out to play with his friends. As soon as they return, Cuca begins to play "doctrina" (doctrine class) with Beto. Today she tries to teach him the Hail Mary, getting him to repeat lines of the prayer; Beto

cannot remember the lines although he can repeat them after Cuca, and Cuca does begin to lose patience with him while she imitates in voice and manner the nun she has listened to for the last hour. She goes to the door of the house compound and calls two small neighbors over, inviting them to play school. Again Cuca takes the role of the schoolteacher, scolding upon occasion. Finally as the children tire of this game, Cuca suggests that they play house. Cuca is the mother while she appoints José, a five-year-old from across the street, to play the role of the father. Even here she is the authority figure and tells José how to play his role, directing him when to go to the "fields," when to "return," etc.

Night is falling and Cuca, at the insistence of her mother, turns herself reluctantly to her studies. She does not understand part of the teacher's instruction and neither her father nor her mother can help her. She grows increasingly more tearful as she has problems with her work and finally her mother rebukes her, telling her she should have started working earlier. Finally she completes the work, or, at least, calls it complete. She sits around with the family for a while, as they all chat together about their day; Cuca and her mother embroider.

Around nine, Cuca's mother sets out a cold supper of bread and milk; Cuca joins her, helping. Beto, Chema, and Cuca eat first, the kitchen being lighted by a petroleum lamp. They return to the bedroom while Cuca's father and mother eat. Soon it will be time to sleep and Beto is already ready for bed. Cuca and Chema wait awhile, arguing and playing together, but they finally take off

their clothes and crawl into bed. Cuca thinks briefly of what she will do on the morrow, before sleep overtakes her.

\* \* \*

In this day, we have seen Cuca in interaction with her family. She runs errands for her mother and performs chores within the household. Her domestic activities, then, center around the home but carry her into the community. While she is subordinate to her parents, she does have some control over her younger siblings and is a socializing agent, particularly during play activity. Her domestic responsibilities are usually performed at the behest of her mother; she may, however, request to perform specific tasks.

By attending formal catechism classes, she comes into contact with the nuns and is subordinate to them. Later, in play, she performs a teaching role with her younger brother. In the class she practices religious ritual and, by taking her brother along, exposes him to religious training at an early age.

Cuca also participates in the formal educational system, coming into contact with schoolteachers and other children of the community. She receives formal instruction and plays in non-age-graded groups. While she is in a subordinate position to the schoolteachers, she can achieve some dominance in the playground.

Thus while her life is based in the home, Cuca moves into the community to attend school, church, and to make purchases in the stores.

#### Discussion One

By analyzing the various elements of a day in the life of Cuca, or any other child in Cajititlán, one can see the divergent influences

upon each life. Thus, we shall examine the roles of girls as socializers and as the recipients of socialization. The major components of the socialization task force, for both boys and girls, are females: older sisters, mothers, teachers, and nuns. Thus in considering the socialization of children we are addressing ourselves to the varying female influences upon their lives, in contrast to the influence of males. First we shall give attention to the acquisition of skills or tasks and how and where these are learned. Then the process of non-task-oriented socialization will be examined. Religious training, on a familial and extra-familial basis, will be the subject of the third section, while the influence of schoolteachers will follow. Finally attention will be focused on play behavior and the practicing of roles by children.

#### Acquisition of Skills or Tasks

In Cajititlán, little girls are taught or learn many skills quite early in life. A girl will start to sweep and mop at about five years of age, and will usually have practiced this for some time with toy brooms, or even the adult instruments. She essentially teaches herself through play. She also begins to run errands at about the same age; if she is the oldest child in the home she will have followed her mother around on errands while she will have done the same with older siblings if she is one of the younger children.

Tasks such as washing clothes and ironing require greater motor coordination. A girl of seven often starts ironing flat pieces, usually with much advice and supervision by her mother or older sister since

there is danger involved in using the fire-heated irons. Washing clothes, Cajititlán fashion, involves strength in the arms and hands; a child of about eight starts helping her mother wash and mothers usually show great patience in teaching this task for many of the girl's early efforts must be redone because they are not clean enough. It is also at this time of life that a girl starts actively helping in caring for and socializing younger siblings.

It can be seen, then, that a small girl starts early in learning the skills she will use during her entire lifetime. Boys, on the other hand, have much more time to play. Among the poorest families, little boys sometimes start gathering firewood at about ten years of age, but most boys are not required to work about the house or in the fields until about fifteen years of age. Thus, while Cuca is helping around the house, her brother, Chema, has much more free time, and he practices at carrying out "manly" activities such as horseback riding, roping, and playing with toy guns.

The rationalizations for such discrepancies in task-oriented socialization are many. First, schools interfere in field work for boys since a man's working day often ends soon after school lets out, and the fields are often far away. Agricultural enterprise is arduous work and the boys lack the strength to really aid their fathers, according to informants. Most importantly, however, is the fact that in Cajititlán, division of labor by sex is fairly rigid and little boys do not learn what are considered to be feminine tasks. Both boys and girls spend much time with their mothers and the mothers, essentially, know no tasks to teach their sons. Their daughters, on the other hand,

can help them with their work. An example might clarify this matter. Boys sometimes serve as functional "daughters" by running errands if a woman has no available daughters; however this is considered a woman's work and if there are any daughters in the house, they are called upon; in the same manner, a boy might help with the sweeping. Other tasks such as washing and ironing are considered solely the work of women and girls, and a woman without daughters would not request such work from her sons.

Moreover, it appears that little girls actually welcome the learning of domestic tasks. They see their older sisters and mothers performing in this manner and desire to do likewise. It might be noted that as a girl grows older she becomes more likely to resist working, perhaps only because the newness has faded and drudgery has set in.

It is additionally important to mention that the learning of these skills is crucial to the girl's later ability to function as a woman, particularly in such crucial tasks as sewing and tortilla-making. Both require practice and perseverance and a girl who can perform well in these areas is spoken of highly and continually praised. Mastery of these arts will later be a source of pride to a husband, and lack thereof will cause him shame. While men often brag that their womenfolk make the best tortillas, the reverse can also hold. Thus doña Carolina, a respected elderly woman, recounted a particularly embarrassing time in her life, as follows:

When I was just married, I was still [floja] lazy because I had not gotten accustomed to getting the tortillas ready to send to my husband in the fields. I soon learned that the tortillas I sent had to be almost perfect in appearance. If the tortillas were too large or too thick, the other men would throw my husband's tortillas in the fire, telling him that the tortillas were good only for tinder. This caused him great shame and when he recounted this to me, I, too, was greatly ashamed. I started to get up earlier in order to have time to make better tortillas.

Thus the young girl learns that to become a woman she must continually practice the tasks which she will carry out for the rest of her life. She busies herself running errands, making tortillas, sewing, washing, ironing, etc., and, perhaps most importantly, she cares for her younger siblings, teaching them the things which she has learned.

#### Non-Task-Oriented Enculturation

A child is born into an already established group, his household. Usually his first two years are spent in much physical contact with his mother, and he is the center of attention. Discipline tends to be lax and he is pampered by all family members; thus Luz, Cuca's sister, is paid much attention by her mother, father, and siblings. As long as she remains the youngest family member, she will not be deprived of this affection. Much will change, though, if her mother again becomes pregnant.

Infants in Cajititlán used to be fed on demand but now most mothers feed their babes every three hours. If the mother does not become again pregnant, weaning is a gradual process, usually occurring between twelve and eighteen months of age. When a woman becomes

pregnant, however, her milk dries up. Women believe that the mother's milk is actually blood and that the reason a woman's milk dries up is that the blood is now going to form a new child.

Weaning, when carried out abruptly, is believed by all to be traumatic to the child. Such children become angry, get sick, run fevers, and cry. Women who must wean due to another pregnancy, and those who are merely weaning their children because it is time, use the same methods, although, in the latter case, they do it more gradually.

Zábila (aloe) is rubbed into the nipple and its bitter taste discourages the child; mothers also hide from their children and ridicule them. Bottle feeding is becoming more common and such children are generally allowed to keep the bottle until they themselves grow tired of it. Even here, however, ridicule might have its part to play, as María Felix, a thirty-year-old mother, explained happened with her child:

When Rosa Alba was four years of age, she still used her bottle, carrying it with her everywhere. One day she was in our store when don Mingo came in. He looked at her and said, "Why are you drinking chichota de puerco [pig's milk] because that's what's in your bottle." Alba never drank from her bottle again, throwing it to the floor on the spot.

Usually a child's attempts to continue nursing are the subject of glee, for the children often show imagination in their efforts to continue to nurse. Women, when gathered in groups, enjoy telling of these experiences. For example, one informant told unceasingly of her son's increasing attempts to cajole her into allowing him to nurse. He would follow her around with a chair he could hardly carry, saying in a cooing voice, "siéntate, mamá, siéntate" ("sit down, Mama, sit down"). In spite of the joking manner with which this matter is



treated post hoc, all women agree that weaning is a critical and dangerous time in a child's life. Often, in addition to the aforementioned difficulties that a child encounters, he will develop sípil, reported elsewhere (e.g. Foster 1967:128) as chípil. This disease is caused by jealousy and the symptoms begin when the mother is pregnant, becoming more acute with the birth of the new child. The most characteristic symptoms is "aching fingernails," inferred by the fact that children affected by this disease worry their hands together; other symptoms include headaches, chills, fever, and diarrhea. Children are known to die of sípil. Informants believe that the symptoms become aggravated at the birth of the child because the child then sees his mother giving active affection to another youngster. Mothers realize that one of the best ways to fight this infirmity is to give the older child attention; thus some of his anxieties about no longer being the center of attention are eased. Another common cure is to sew a red shirt for the child who, on wearing this shirt, will become happy due to its bright color.

At any rate, weaning is the first occasion upon which the child in Cajititlán becomes almost totally frustrated. Naturally enough some discipline occurs before this time, for children must learn not to touch hot objects or to play with other dangerous objects. Many mothers hold their children over hot stoves and put their fingers close enough for them to feel some pain, thus showing the children that such behavior will result in distress, while explaining the dangers of fire at the same time.

The care and patience women often show in teaching children about danger is excerpted from field notes, as follows:

Today I was on the way to get my mail when Bertha, the daughter of Juana Sebastián, came over and asked me if matches would burn a person. She was playing with Lourdes, the daughter of Fernanda Pérez, who had found a box of matches. I explained that matches could burn and showed them a scar I had on my finger, telling them it was from a match. Unfortunately, there was sun in my eyes and as I talked with the girls I had one eye closed. Lourdes said I wasn't telling the truth because I was winking. I thought I had finally convinced them, and then I went on.

On the way back, Bertha ran back when she saw me, telling me that they were getting ready to burn the matches. I gave them another lecture when Fernanda apparently heard me talking and came out to investigate. I told her the situation and she said, "Who has matches?"; Bertha held up both her hands to show that they were empty. Then Lourdes held out the evidence. Juana lightly hit Lourdes' hand and explained, very soothingly I thought, why they shouldn't play with matches. She said that they would strike the match and then it would burn their fingers. Then they would drop the match on their clothes and start these on fire. She told Lourdes that whenever she found matches, she should give them to her. Then she thanked me and I left.

Although corporal punishment is sometimes meted out, threats and ridicule are the most common means of controlling a child. Spanking, while not rare, is much less common than the threat of tres nalgadas (three hits on the buttocks). The child is also threatened with having a hypodermic injection, being sent away, or being taken away by the devil or the gringa who also happens to be the local anthropologist.

Ridicule, as mentioned in the case of weaning, is by far the most frequent way of disciplining children. When a child goes into a rage, for example, his mother will tease him, calling him a chillón (cry baby), or the like. Children are shamed as a means of cajoling them into doing what the mother wishes.

### Religious Training

There are three major agents in the socialization of children in the religious sphere: mothers, older sisters, and nuns. The mother is the first agent, for children are taken to the church at a very early age, and mothers start telling their children about God and the Virgin even before the children can talk. Mothers cross their children before the children learn to cross themselves.

One mother explained the manner in which she taught her children about religion:

Pointing to the crucifix in the church, I would say, "allá está tu papá, diocito" [there is your Papa, little God]. Pointing to the Virgin I said, "there is the little Virgin, she is your other mother." Then I taught my children to ask God for bread, saying, "ask your Papa for bread." Then my children learned to hold out their right hands, just as they did when asking me for bread.

Usually children master the "Our Father," the "Hail Mary," and the Confiteor in their homes. Older siblings often delight in corrupting their mother's attempts to teach these prayers, instructing the child in parodies. One such goes as follows: "Santa María, mata a tu tía. Dale de palos, hasta que se ría" ("Sainted Mary, kill your aunt. Hit her with a stick, until she laughs.") In spite of this tendency, older sisters almost invariably spend much time helping their younger siblings master religious material; often this takes the form of play which was seen in the case of Cuca with her younger brother.

Beto, because he has an older sister, attends catechism class at the age of three; most children begin at about age four. These classes represent the child's first sustained contact with non-kin members,

nuns and adolescent girls of the community who lead the classes. These classes also demand a degree of quietness up until now only expected at masses. The classes are held each weekday during the month of October and every Thursday during other months. The most important role, according to the Cajititlences, is to prepare children for making their first communion, although post-communion children also attend.

Baptism marks the earliest rite of passage for a child, yet the first communion is the first time that the child actively participates in, and is cognizant of, a rite of passage. When the child reaches proficiency in reciting the answers to the catechism, he is eligible to take his first communion; the vast majority do this at a special mass held on Christmas eve, and are ideally around seven or eight years of age. A godmother or godfather must be chosen (godmothers for girls and godfathers for boys). Generally the child is allowed to select his godparent although parents have a veto power and can avoid forming a fictive kinship tie if they do not wish to. The godparent is responsible for furnishing a rosary, prayerbook, and sometimes, the special outfits worn--long, white dresses for girls and blue trousers and white shirts for boys.

After the first communion, the child's status is altered for he begins to participate actively in the religious life of the community. Each year on January fourth, during the fiesta in celebration of the Three Kings, all girls who have just made the first communion march in the processional, two abreast, in their white dresses. For several years afterward, girls continue to wear

this ceremonial clothing on specified occasions. Each night during the month of May, women of the town sponsor masses each night for La Purísima (the Immaculate Conception); girls are expected to don first communion dresses and offer flowers to the Virgin. June is set aside for a similar celebration for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. During this month boys offer flowers; they do not wear communion attire but wear a red band across their chests. Both boys and girls do this each year until about age ten. This is explained by the Cajititlences in a very pragmatic fashion: the girls outgrow their dresses and the boys would be embarrassed to continue participating after the girls of their age have stopped.

The importance of these activities lies in the fact that children now become more active participants in village life, with responsibilities to the community. This foreshadows the type of religious participation which will be expected of them throughout their lifetimes. It is important to note, however, that boys are participating in a female endeavor, thus symbolically emphasizing the strong tie that boys develop with their mothers. The period between the first communion and ten years of age can thus be viewed as an "apprenticeship" of sorts; it is perhaps no coincidence that at age ten boys no longer sit with their mothers at mass, but move over to the men's side of the church.

Thus it has been shown that religious training is an integral part of the child's enculturation, and his first real instruction by non-family members, the nuns. It is in the religious arena that the child first leaves his family and begins to develop a sense of

responsibility to, and participation in, the community at large, for in a very real sense the community-level ethos is stringently tied to the Catholic religion as it is practiced in Cajititlán.

### Formal Education

It will be recalled that Cuca attended the state school for girls, her teacher was from Guadalajara, she participated in singing patriotic songs, and was disciplined. These items represent some elements of schooling, evident in Cajititlán, and discussed more fully in this section.

Cajititlán has three schools, serving grades one through six. Two are state-supported schools, one for boys and the other for girls, while the third is the parochial school and taught by nuns. There is much disagreement in town about which type of school is superior, for parents who send their children to parochial school cite the fact that the nuns are better teachers and, besides, religion is taught, while their opponents claim that schools which are sexually-segregated are better and that the state schoolteachers are superior.

Although education is technically obligatory, only about 80 per cent of Cajititlán's children attend any school at all. There is no one to enforce school attendance and absentees are frequent. People claim a number of reasons for not sending their children to school. Many say they simply cannot afford it; state school education is avowedly gratis but collections are always being made for one thing or another.

Most feel, however, that formal schooling is more necessary for boys than for girls, particularly above the sixth grade level where

a student must live in Guadalajara with relatives or take a bus in each day. There is a belief that beyond reading, writing, and doing figures, a girl's education is wasted since she is being educated to belong to another family. That is, when a girl marries she often goes to live with her husband's family, thus removing herself as a source of income for her own family. School statistics indicate that this is indeed the case since about twice as many boys finish the sixth grade as do girls, and, of those who finish, twice as many boys will go to secondary school, although this represents a very small percentage of the school population.

Yet most children do receive some years of instruction, some starting school at five or six years of age while others do not start until ten or eleven. Most are sent for one year of "practice"--learning to sit still, learning to obey the teacher's instruction, etc.--and are not expected to pass the first grade; this is particularly the case with the very young students. This causes enrollment in the first grade to be very high, some classes reaching over one hundred thirty, with only one teacher.

Most students do eventually learn the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Perhaps more importantly they find themselves in a more sternly disciplined environment, and are taught cooperation with others. Almost all of the teachers come from Guadalajara and the students are thus faced with a view of a life unlike that of their own. Finally, just as in the religious sphere children begin to develop a sense of their own community, in the schools they begin to develop feelings of Nationalism.

The type of discipline present in the classroom depends on the training of the teachers. Ridicule is the oldest form of discipline known in Cajititlán; in the past children were made to wear fake donkey's ears and kneel in front of a window so passersby could see that they had failed to do their lessons or had misbehaved. This type of discipline seems to almost have completely disappeared in the village. However the parochial schoolteachers still use some physically punishing forms of discipline; for example, a child is made to kneel and assume the position of crucifixion while holding bricks or other heavy objects in his hand. The state schoolteachers lean toward having children stand by their desks or in the corner. Sitting quietly in one's seat, reciting lessons, lining up quickly and efficiently is encouraged, and failure to do so might result in a reprimand. Not doing one's homework is likely to result in punishment. Thus, although the rules of the school game vis-a-vis the home game are different, discipline is functionally analogous since failure to do one's chores at home and misbehavior can also result in punishment on the familial level.

The child is also taught in the schools to cooperate. Groups of children are instructed in group dances to celebrate various national holidays and the like. Thus the child learns more about the requirements of group life. As will be seen in later chapters, women actually must cooperate more frequently than men and, in this sense, formal schooling could be considered more desirable for girls.

At one other level schooling is also, on a practical level, more closely aligned with the reality of later life for girls. Girls are taught elaborate stitches and practice their sewing in school; of



course this function could be performed solely within the household but since this work is displayed at the end of the year, girls learn to take more time and care. Boys, on the other hand, learn handicrafts which they never practice in later life; it might be argued that manual dexterity is thus learned, however, and this might be important in later life.

As was mentioned previously, one important contribution of the schools is to imbue the students with the idea of what it is to be Mexican. Schoolchildren participate in parades honoring national holidays as well as religious processions; they learn about their country's history in school, and are taught to have pride in their own nation. In these attempts the schools seem quite effective. The school's attempt, plus that of religious celebrations honoring the Virgin of Guadalupe, couple to teach national pride at an early age.

Formal schooling is almost entirely in the hands of the schoolteachers, be they nuns or secular teachers; in the Cajititlences' memory there has been only one male schoolteacher. Thus, in this important area of socialization we again find that females predominate.

State schoolteachers view their roles as very important and feel they have a great and beneficial effect upon their students. One of the three Cajititlán-born schoolteachers agreed with their analysis:

When I started teaching in Cajititlán, very few children wore shoes to school. But they started to notice how the teachers dressed [empezaban a fijar en ellas], and now they all wear shoes.

Other locals disagree with this point of view. The schoolteachers often wear mini-skirts or slacks and townfolk fear that this will set a bad example. Even the parochial school is not free from this

taint since secular teachers are sometimes hired. One such teacher dressed in mini-skirts and, according to informants, told unceasingly of her boyfriends, instead of teaching; parents feared that this behavior would adversely influence their daughters. In this case, some of the mothers talked with the school director, a nun, and the teacher was not rehired. Men leave attendance of school functions and solution of academic difficulties to their wives.

In summary, in Cajititlán one finds a system of schooling in which not all school-age children participate and, of those who do, not all complete the six years. Education is viewed as more necessary for men in the sense that it is more economically viable; it has been suggested that, in fact, many of the activities learned by girls will actually prove more useful in later life than those learned by boys. In later chapters we shall examine the economic roles of women and the practical training they must acquire in money management. Thus it might be argued that practical mathematics, as learned in the schools, is more essential for girls than for boys.

The schools do teach the young children formal group discipline, and national pride. As in the homes, though, the role models are women and young boys remain in close association with women.

### Play

Heretofore we have concentrated upon varying socializers in the child's life and have mentioned that older sisters have an important role to enact. Often with children Cuca's age, the role of the sister as socializer takes the form of play; it will be recalled that Cuca instructed her brother in the catechism in this manner.

We should now turn to an examination of the effect that such roles have upon the participants. In order to do this we shall first turn our attention to the type of play behavior engaged in by boys vis-a-vis girls. Pre-adolescent girls tend to cluster in non-age-graded play groups; thus recess at school finds older girls playing with younger girls rather than with girls their own age. This foreshadows the overriding importance of the mother role in this society.

In the homes, girls again play with younger children, often siblings. If a girl has no younger siblings or needs more children for her game, it is not uncommon for her to actively recruit other youngsters from the neighborhood. In this manner, boys and girls of other families, who have no older sisters, are incorporated into play behavior at a young age.

Whatever the game, the girl in charge absolutely dominates. She directs the players' movements through the game, as Cuca did with her brother Beto and the neighboring children. Thus girls in Cuca's position learn patterns of dominance over boys be they younger siblings or neighbors, and the boys learn to submit. This anticipates the fact that, within the home, women are often the real household heads.

Boys, above a certain age, tend to play in more age-graded groups, although smaller boys are sometimes allowed to participate in a junior role; boys' play usually requires physical strength and muscular coordination. Girls begin to venture away from the house at about four years of age while they run errands; boys tend to remain house children until a later age. A boy of four might play very near his house but seldom leaves the immediate area, unescorted. His entry into the streets of Cajititlán usually takes some time, for a youngster

is often bullied by older boys. So until the age of nine or ten the boy stays close to home, playing with older sisters or neighboring boys and girls. Boys will, however, actively seek other activity at six or seven years of age and sometimes their presence will be tolerated.

By examining an incidence of play among boys, several themes will become evident; the following is excerpted from field notes:

Today I observed some boys in play down the street. Twelve of the boys, from ten to twelve years of age, were mounted on stick "horses." A group of younger boys would stand between the older boys and a small dog. The younger group would start to run toward the dog, thus making the dog run. As soon as the dog started up, the other boys would follow, attempting to rope the dog until one of them succeeded. Then the dog would be let loose, and the whole process would begin again.

Thus one sees the role of young boys in play with older boys; their status is definitely that of a junior partner. More importantly, however, one can examine the type of play exhibited by boys. All games, after the boy has left the dominance of his sister, involve practice, not in the skills of agriculture or a trade, but in the elements of machismo. Thus while girls continually practice the types of roles and role-behavior of a skill nature, boys practice at being manly; they play with guns, rope "cattle," etc. This type of play foreshadows the development of the boy's ability to live up to the standards of the cult of masculinity.

Thus, in examining play behavior, several motifs are evident. Girls play at adult-women roles and in this play learn patterns of dominance over males; males learn to submit. In later play, boys practice manliness, rather than playing at their adult economic roles.

A distinction between public and private roles will become more evident later, but mention should be made that this is also already manifest in play behavior with all girls playing in the homes and older boys playing in the streets.

### Summary

When a child is born in Cajititlán his first childhood contacts will be almost entirely with women. Within the household, people of Cajititlán agree that it is the mother's prime responsibility to train children, saying, "la primera educación es de la mamá" ("a child's first education comes from his mother"). Fathers are away from the homes a great deal and are apt to be distant when present; mothers, on the other hand, lavish affection and attention on their children. In the school and religious sphere one again finds that all children spend much time with women.

The amount of time passed with women is perhaps not as crucial as the quality of the time spent, for women are charged with the very real responsibility of training a child to become a functioning member of society. Women teach children to behave in the Cajititlán-fashion.

Children must master habits and skills. In their homes they learn to control bodily functions and to withstand the frustrations of life; girls, in addition, learn chores. Female familial socializers also begin their training on the religious level and this arena moves the children away from the households and into the community sphere. By participating in religious ritual, the child is thus incorporated as a member of the community at large. School training, which is almost entirely extra-familial, teaches children to have pride in their country

and thus incorporates them into an organizationally higher level.

Finally it shall be shown in later chapters that the patterns learned in play will be of life-long importance.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ADOLESCENCE, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE

#### Vignette Two

It is still dark when the church bells begin to ring on a Sunday morning in Cajititlán. Rosa (Rosi) Rodríguez awakens when her mother calls softly to her. She sleeps on a single bed while her two brothers, José, ten, and Viviano, six, sleep beside her on another bed in the room they also share with their parents. She can hear her twenty-two-year-old brother, Jorge, and his wife, Bertha, stirring in their room across the compound. The family quickly dresses and leaves the house as the last bell rings for mass. Rosi and Bertha take with them the sevillana (mantilla or head-covering) while Rosi's mother carries the more traditional rebozo (shawl). Reforms in church law to the contrary, it is still felt unfitting to enter the church bare-headed. Many Cajititlences continue to prefer the earliest mass, and Rosi's family is no exception. The early mass, which starts around 6:00 a.m., is thought not to interfere with the details of the day and it is said that one feels closer to God in the early morning hours. Besides this, any tourists from Guadalajara are more likely to attend the noon or five o'clock mass and their presence is often considered disruptive; the adolescent girls from among their ranks wear slacks, sleeveless blouses, or mini-skirts to masses and do not show proper respect, talking and laughing. The early mass is thought to "belong" to the people of Cajititlán.

Rosi and her family hurry to the mass, Rosi hoping all the while to catch a glimpse of Nacho Díaz, her novio (boyfriend). She, her mother, Bertha, and Viviano separate from her father and two brothers at the door of the church and head for the women's side of the church. They find a pew together and kneel, awaiting the priest. Rosi takes this opportunity to glance at the men's side of the church, searching for Nacho; not finding him she tries to turn her attention to the more serious aspect of the religious service. Kneeling and standing, praying and listening, she follows the service, with difficulty. On the way to the church her mother rebuked her for the length of her skirt, arguing that it was too short and Rosi remembers this during the mass. She feels that she looks stylish in her just-above-the-knee skirt and that her mother is old-fashioned when she avers that short skirts are immodest. After all, her skirts are much longer than those worn by many girls and the nuns have never said anything to her when she goes to give catechism classes every Thursday. She cannot understand why her mother does not realize that times are changing.

As the mass ends and they leave the church, Rosi and Bertha run to do an errand, after a brief conference with Rosi's mother. First they go to the butcher shop and ask for a half-kilo of beef; Rosi pays for the beef, but leaves it there. Then they go by their house to pick up two buckets and a plate for the beef; since meat is in short supply, Rosi's mother wanted them to get the order in immediately. They walk to doña Augustina's café where they leave one of the buckets to be filled with charcoal for cooking; then they walk across town to



purchase four and a half liters of milk from doña Lupe Huerta whose husband keeps cows. Retracing their steps, with Bertha carrying the now heavy bucket of milk, they return to pick up the carbón (charcoal) and pay for it and to collect the already paid for beef. Rosi looks longingly at the carnitas (fried bits of pork) now cooking in a big tub in front of the butcher's and wishes that they were going to have some of that; at thirty pesos a kilo (\$2.40 U.S.), however, the meat is too expensive and is sold mainly to the Sunday tourists.

Rosi is pleased that six months ago her brother married Bertha. Sunday morning tasks used to take much longer, for Rosi, as the only daughter, had to make several trips back to the house in order to carry all of the purchases. Besides this, she enjoys talking with Bertha as they hurry through the cobblestoned streets, for errands are no longer the lonely tasks they were earlier. Now as the town is beginning to wake up and all are enjoying the sounds of the animals and the early morning cool, Bertha and Rosi start home. Rosi again thinks briefly of how lucky the whole family is that Bertha has fit into the family so well; she knows that many families have in-law problems when a new daughter-in-law is introduced but, from all Rosi can see, Bertha and her mother get along very well.

They return to the house, loaded down with their purchases, laughing and joking. Rosi talks with Bertha often about her boyfriend and today is no exception as she speculates aloud about why he was not present at the mass. Bertha suggests that maybe Rosi and Nacho stayed up too late last night, talking at the compound door, and that, for this reason, Nacho was too flojo (lazy) to get up this morning. Rosi

admits that they did talk from ten to eleven o'clock but argues that she was able to get up; then Bertha suggests that Rosi should find another suitor who is not lazier than she is.

As soon as they enter the house, however, they stop talking about such things, as Rosi's mother asks what they were laughing about. Bertha and Rosi both know that Rosi's parents are aware that she has a novio and probably know who he is; it would be unseemly, though, to talk about such things to one's mother, and all play a game of ignorance.

As Rosi's mother starts a fire for the tortillas, Bertha lights the two-burner gas stove to boil the milk, and Rosi begins to sweep. Rosi's mother remarks on the priest's avowance that since this is Sunday no one should work. All laugh as Rosi's mother further explains that since the priest is a man he means that only men should not work, since all know that women work every day of their lives. Bertha suggests that they refuse to work today and let the menfolk starve, sending the three into gales of laughter. Jorge and Rosi's father, Donato, have remained behind in the plaza to drink tequila and chat with their fellow townsmen; they will follow the priest's advice and not go to the fields today. One soon hears the sound of tortilla-making as Rosi works at the metate and Bertha and Rosi's mother pat out the cakes.

The men return around 9:00 a.m. just as breakfast is ready; Viviano has been amusing himself in the compound and Rosi is sent to find José who is out playing. She finally locates him and scolds him for not coming home to eat, imitating in style and manner the tone

of her mother's rebuke about her short skirt, now almost forgotten. José begins to pout and Rosi puts her arm around him as they return home, in order to console him. Breakfast is eaten and Rosi washes the dishes, her mother clears the table, and Bertha begins to make all the beds. When her mother goes to feed the pigs, leaving Rosi alone in the kitchen, she begins to think of how little work she has now that Bertha is here to help with the household tasks. Being the only daughter in a family is difficult but Rosi now realizes that she has less work as her other friends, who have sisters, are getting more work as their older sisters marry and leave their households. She knows that Bertha, though, will soon comprar un niño (have a child) and will not have quite as much time to devote; she looks forward to this, however, since she will have an opportunity to interact with the child who will be her first nephew and she thinks about the time in the future when she will have children of her own. She knows that her mother does not want her to marry soon and has heard enough tales to make her wary of marriage. What if she can't get along with her mother-in-law or her husband turns out to be a drunk?

Now, though, the early morning tasks are finished and the three have a chance to sit and talk for about an hour before starting the midday meal. Bertha says that she believes she will go see her mother who lives but a few blocks away and perhaps help her with the preparations for her own midday meal; Rosi is sorry to hear this for she knows that this will mean more work for her. Yet Sunday is a special day and one should remember one's family and visit with them.

Bertha comes from a family of five girls and her mother is now alone, all of the girls having married; Rosi's mother has expressed her approval on many occasions that Bertha should help her mother and has told Rosi that she should do likewise should she marry.

Rosi suggests that she could sew for a while. Her mother vetoes this idea since it is Sunday and Rosi is being paid to make pillowcases for a girl in town who will soon marry; although the daily work of cleaning the house and fixing meals is permitted, her mother feels it would be unseemly to iron, wash, or sew for pay on the Sabbath. Doña Clotilde, a very old widowed aunt of Rosi's mother, comes in and is given a tortilla filled with beans; she has no children and visits relatives who, taking pity on her, feed her. As d. Clotilde and Rosi's mother chat, Rosi sits and listens, not entering into the conversation. Rosi and her mother start preparations for the midday meal and d. Clotilde shows no signs of leaving; Rosi realizes that the meat will have to be stretched for her mother will invite her aunt to stay for dinner.

After the midday meal, Viviano begs for Rosi to play with him. They play *lotería*, but not until Rosi has helped with cleaning up the kitchen. The day lingers on and Rosi wishes for nightfall and the serenata (serenade), hoping her mother will allow her to walk with the other girls around the plaza. Each Sunday she must beg to be allowed to go and her mother sometimes consents; she remembers that when she was a girl of nine or so there was never any question and she was allowed to attend each time there was a serenade.

When Bertha returns from her natal household, Rosi enlists her aid in convincing her mother that she should be allowed to go.

Bertha broaches the topic with Rosi's mother and points out that she will go too and watch out for Rosi; Rosi's mother finally agrees and as soon as it is dark Rosi and Bertha rush to change into dressier clothes, heels, and stockings. They walk to the plaza with Jorge who will join some of his companions at a local cantina. The plaza is already crowded and Bertha goes to join other young wives and young mothers who are sitting on benches around the plaza. Vivano and José, who have also accompanied them, go to play with the children who are running in and out of the groups of strolling adolescents. Rosi looks for a group with which to walk and spots two cousins who are walking around the plaza, counterclockwise. She takes one by the arm and they start to stroll around, while groups of boys walk in the opposite direction. As each group passes she looks for Nacho, and her cousins, who currently do not have novios, flirt with each group; although girls never flirt when walking alone around town, it is considered quite normal to flirt when strolling with other girls. One boy separates himself from his group and starts to walk beside Rosi's cousin, Gemma. He chats with her for a while and, when Gemma doesn't respond, rejoins his group when they next meet. Rosi briefly feels sorry for Esther, her other cousin, who is sandwiched between Gemma and Rosi, for Esther will have little chance of talking with a boy tonight since she is not on the outside. Finally Nacho walks over and, taking Rosi's arm, begins to stroll with her; Rosi does not take her arm from Esther's since she knows that if she walked alone with Nacho, there would be talk. As this pattern repeats itself, the walk around the plaza gets more difficult for many groups of four

or even five abreast are now walking in the plaza. The smaller children tease both boys and girls who are walking with each other.

Rosi is pleased that the serenade is now held every Sunday, a practice which has occurred only in the last few years. Before this time, the term "serenata" was used exclusively for times when musicians played in the kiosk of the plaza, on holidays such as Independence Day. Now, however, each Sunday adolescents join to dar vueltas (make turns around the plaza) and the now misnomer term of "serenade" has continued in use. Rosi's mother, among others, does not approve of this situation since she believes that girls use the opportunity to search out novios, which is indeed the case. Younger people such as Rosi and Bertha like the idea and feel that there is now more movimiento (movement, action) in town.

Around ten o'clock, Bertha comes over and tells Rosi that it is time to leave. She briefly says good-bye to Nacho, knowing that he will probably not meet her at the door of her house tonight and will stay in the plaza and drink with his friends. She helps Bertha locate Viviano and José and the four of them return home, leaving Jorge in the saloon; neither she nor Bertha is worried about Jorge since he has no reputation as a drunkard, although he does drink to excess upon occasion. As a special treat, Bertha stops and buys some tamales for their supper from a woman who sells them each Sunday in the plaza. Rosi's mother is pleased when they return and they eat the tamales with milk, chatting. The boys are very tired and go to bed while Rosi, her mother, her father, and Bertha chat in the kitchen and await the return of Jorge. When he enters the house, they all retire.

In this vignette, Rosi also interacts with family members, as did Cuca. She performs chores both within and without the home. She knows, however, what tasks are expected of her and usually carries them out without being asked. While Cuca served as an economic intermediary, merely making purchases, Rosi now has means to actively earn money. While still being enculturated by her mother, she has a much more dominant role over her younger siblings. Her sister-in-law, Bertha, treats Rosi almost as a peer, and Rosi has a confidential relationship with her.

She also has an expanded religious role. By teaching catechism classes, she interacts with the nuns and has sanctioned authority over her pupils. By attending mass, she participates in religious ritual but also views the mass as a social event--a chance to search out her boyfriend.

In the Sunday evening serenade, we see Rosi's participation in courtship and her interactions with other girls and her boyfriend. She is chaperoned by her sister-in-law who assumes responsibility for Rosi's actions, and Rosi follows the cultural forms prescribed in the serenade.

Thus, Rosi, at sixteen, is tied to domestic and economic activities within the home but does move into the community for religious and economic purposes. The Sunday evening serenades also provide a weekly opportunity to interact, publicly, with her novio. Rosi, who has more responsibility, also has less opportunity to move freely outside of the domestic circle.

### Discussion Two

As viewed by the Cajititlences, adolescence is a difficult period of time to define. The onset of menses, while recognized as important in terms of a girl's ability to procreate, does not signal any great changes in her behavior. It will be recalled that boys begin to sit on the men's side of the church at about ten years of age; this same age is also recognized as a turning point in a girl's life. Before this time there are fewer constraints and a girl is relatively free to leave the house alone at night to attend rosary services, make purchases, and the like. At ten or so the process is reversed and the girl is brought back into the home. Parents fear that a girl of ten who roams the streets at night might be stolen away, even though she is not yet pubescent. Thus there is a sense in which adolescence begins at the age of ten.

However, the age of fifteen is formally recognized as marking a change from childhood to adolescence in various culturally symbolic ways. The female is no longer a niña, but is a señorita. Often the birthday itself is the occasion of a formal party, marking this change in status. During exercises led by the priest in the Lenten season, all unmarried women, fifteen and older, meet together. Finally fasting during Good Friday usually starts in the fifteenth year for girls even though the priest cautions that only people of twenty-one years or older must fast. Thus, Rosa, at sixteen, is a true adolescent.

This chapter will devote itself to a discussion of adolescence, mainly confining itself to girls from the age of fifteen through marriage. It will be seen that in a cultural sense, true social adulthood is often



not actually reached until a woman has a child, if she and her husband then form their own household either by moving to another house or constructing a separate kitchen within the household. The process of achieving adulthood will be discussed later.

The socialization process continues in adolescence and will be the subject of the first section. Next a description of the increasing role which adolescents play in family life will be presented. Then we shall examine the public life and community participation of adolescent girls. Courtship and then marriage will also be discussed.

### Socialization

Ten years of age is a crucial turning point for girls as freedom of movement is withdrawn and they are no longer permitted to venture out alone after dark. Little attempt is made to explain this change to the girl and often pouting and even temper tantrums are the result. Partially this can be attributed to the fact that sex education is virtually absent in Cajititlán, and many adolescent girls have little knowledge of the mechanisms of sexual intercourse, conception, and the like, since these are thought to be unfit topics of conversation with unmarried girls. There are ways employed to avoid the acquisition of sexual knowledge. For example, although Cajititlán is an agricultural community and one often sees animals mating in the streets and in the fields, conscious attempts are made to shelter all children from witnessing these events. Children are taught that younger siblings are purchased, and the most commonly used assertion in Cajititlán when one person is informing another of a birth is that, "Fulana compro un niño" (Fulana bought a

a child). Others are told that the stork or midwife brought the child. The recent construction of the Guadalajara airport, some seventeen kilometers from Cajititlán, provides an additional social fiction since children are now sometimes taught that an airplane brings a baby. That all children are not completely taken in by these attempts at obfuscation is indicated in the following excerpt from field notes:

I was sitting at my window typing and could overhear a conversation Conchita, a nine-year-old, was having with another nine-year-old, Sofía; Sofía's mother had given birth a few days before. Sofía announced this fact and Conchita asked if she had caught a glimpse of the stork. Sofía remarked, "don't believe that about the stork for I noticed that my mother was panzona [big-stomached] before she bought the baby and now she isn't." Conchita did not reply and the conversation moved on to a discussion of what they would do at school the next day.

In any case, children do not generally have a clear idea about sex and what knowledge they have comes from peers. Little girls, particularly, are taught to be extremely modest and children do not normally see their parents or other adults nude. This modesty, taught to a young girl, usually lasts throughout life, and does not seem as strongly developed in men. For example though men seem to feel no shame at receiving injections in the buttocks from women, many women will not allow a male doctor to examine them, and, as one woman put it, "I would never show my buttocks to a doctor."

These factors, taken together, make a girl's first menstruation an oftentimes frightening occurrence. Women and girls often tell about the onset of menses after the fact and describe their reactions--invariably they speak in terms of fear although the stories take on an element of humor in the retelling and women laugh about their lack of knowledge. One's mother is sometimes consulted about this phenomenon but more often

the mother just realizes what has happened and then must instruct the girl in the mysteries of menstruation. Thus, d. Teresa, a fifty-year-old, explained her reactions to menstruation:

The first time I had my period, I was quite frightened and thought, "my mother is going to hit me." I went to the lake and washed myself and returned to my home. I was terribly afraid, my mother could tell, and kept asking me what was wrong. I didn't answer but my mother must have guessed and persisted in asking me. I was sitting down and the blood seeped onto my dress, and when my mother saw this, I started to cry, begging her not to hit me. My mother then explained that now I was a *señorita* and that this would happen each month. She brought rags for me to wear and explained that at this time each month I shouldn't eat beef broth, guavas, oranges, vegetables, or cold beverages since these would make my stomach very cold and make it hurt.

It is evident that it is the mother's responsibility to tell her daughters about menstruation, after it has occurred; menstruation is most commonly referred to as "la regla" ("the rule") or "la costumbre" ("the custom"), and is classed as a sickness; it is not uncommon to hear a female aver, "me enfermé" ("I got sick"), meaning that she is menstruating. Usually, however, mothers tell their daughters as little as possible and do not explain the relationship between menstruation and conception as it is viewed in Cajititlán. (This view will be discussed in the chapter on pregnancy and childbirth.)

Mothers do not take this opportunity to explain more about the sexual process; the girl is told only about menstruation. She is cautioned against the eating of tabu foods and told not to bathe during her period, but there is no attempt to explain further.

Around eight years ago, a health center was built in Cajititlán and attempts are being made by the local public health nurse, a native of

Cajititlán, to educate girls before the fact. Thus in 1971 she showed a film about menstruation to thirteen- and fourteen-year-old girls. Most women of the town accepted this idea since they recognize that it would be easier to know about such things before they happen. They claim that it "gives them shame" to talk about such matters with their daughters and are apparently just as pleased that someone else is willing to take over this responsibility.

Yet even though sex per se is not a topic of conversation, mothers do caution their daughters against men, and the evils of men. While they are discouraged from having boyfriends, mothers at the same time caution girls against being alone with their novios, kissing or hugging them, particularly in public. Fear of public censure is quite common in Cajititlán and a mother feels an obligation to protect her daughters from public talk, as well as to protect their virginity. In one case when a boy and girl were walking in town with their arms around each other, the boy's mother took it upon herself to speak with the girl. She explained that people might assume that something else was going on and that the girl should be ashamed. In relating this incident, she proffered the opinion that since the girl's mother was obviously unconcerned about the girl's reputation as evidenced by her failure to censure the girl, she felt she had a responsibility to do so, particularly since she believed the girl was still a señorita (in this case, a virgin).

Although the adolescent girl has usually mastered most of the skills which will be necessary during her lifetime, as has been seen, the major socialization efforts now focus upon her reputation and the

protection of her virginity. This causes additional problems for parents in this day and time since due to the influence of television, schoolteachers, and Guadalaran visitors, girls now dress in shorter skirts; it will be recalled that Rosi was rebuked by her mother due to the length of her skirt. Changes in dress are viewed with alarm by many Cajititlences for, in the past, the knees were always covered and sleeveless blouses never worn. Mothers fear that immodest dress is indicative that morals are now changing, although apparently few girls are pregnant at marriage. The concern over such dress patterns in adolescent girls and a concomitant development toward longer hair in boys (which is actually much less prevalent than short skirts on girls), led one Cajititlence to write a corrido (a poem which is generally set to music), lamenting this development:

Reportes del Pueblo de Cajititlán<sup>1</sup>

Año del cetenta y dos  
Lo que les boy a contar  
Se cumplen las profecias  
El mundo se a de acabar

I am going to tell you  
About the year of '72  
The prophecies are fulfilled  
The world is about to end

En las afueras del pueblo  
de este Cajititlán  
El diablo se aparecio  
Viniendo con sierto plan

On the outskirts of town  
Of this Cajititlán  
The devil appeared  
Coming with a certain plan

Sierto es que se aparecio  
lo vieron barias personas  
que traia unos documentos  
para llebarse la lista  
de las mujeres Rabonas

Surely he appeared  
He was seen by various persons  
And he carried some documents  
To take away a list  
Of the short-skirted women

Estaba Chema Tadeo  
Platicando con don Cleto  
que alos padres de familia  
lla se les perdio el respeto

Chema Tadeo was  
Chatting with don Cleto  
Saying that children no longer  
Respect their parents

Es un purito desorden  
la gente de orden sefija  
tan rabona anda la madre  
como rabona la ija

There is complete disorder  
While the proper people notice  
That the mothers wear skirts as short  
As the skirts worn by the daughters

El mundo lleno de visios  
De delisias y placeres  
que asta los Jobenes hombres  
pues lla quieren ser mujeres

Barios andan lla a la moda  
crellendose muy galanos  
lla perdieron la verguenza  
no son machos Mexicanos

Las mujeres de oy en dia  
todas ponen mal ejemplo  
Rabonas y sin reboso  
asi se meten al templo

Los Jobenes de melena  
todos iran a la guerra  
por que se presumen la moda  
que se inbento en ynglaterra

La moda entre las mujeres  
siempre sebe en las charriadas  
de asco berles las piernas  
vien prietas y muy chorriadas

Las Jobenes coquetean  
para que se siga su nombre  
coquetas y resbalosas  
lla fastidiaron al Hombre

El diablo se aparecio  
lla lo bio este Gorgonio  
a greñudos y rabonas  
se las llebara el demonio

El castigo llegara  
creo que no a de ser tarde  
estos bersos con compuestos  
entre su madre y su padre

por ai ba la despedida  
caminando por el plan  
estos bersos los compuso  
un indito en alfabeto  
del pueblo de Cajititlán

The world so full of vices  
Of delights and pleasures  
That even the young men  
Well, now they want to be women

Many dress in the new style  
Thinking they're quite dashing  
But they've lost their shame  
And aren't Mexican machos

And the women of today  
Now set a bad example  
Short-skirted and shawl-less  
They even dare enter the temple

The long-haired youths  
Will all go to war  
Because they presume the style  
That was invented in England

The style among the women  
Is always seen at rodeos  
With disgust, see their legs  
Very dark and very dirty

The girls flirt  
So their ill fame will continue  
Slippery and flirty  
They annoy men

The devil appeared  
He was seen by Gorgonio  
And he will take to hell  
All the hairy men and short-skirted  
women

The punishment will come  
And I think it won't be long  
These verses were composed  
By your mother and your father

Now I bid you goodbye  
Moving right along  
These verses were composed  
By an illiterate Indian  
Of the village of Cajititlán

Although much public and familial criticism now centers around  
girls who wear short skirts, the majority of the young Cajititlences  
wear skirts just above the knee; older women acknowledge that the length

of their skirts has changed, too, and some do not attach grave importance to this type of dress. Many argue that the ages between fifteen and eighteen have always been particularly difficult for girls and that girls of this age "don't think" or are "stupid." These ages are also regarded as the most likely to produce pregnancy in unmarried girls since the girl does not have the maturity to cope with a boy's advances. For this reason, mothers claim they discourage their daughters from having novios. Yet, although many mothers, such as Rosi's, argue with their daughters about the length of their skirts, they assume that tears and lack of patience with mothers are components of the maturation process; this, according to many, cannot be viewed as any great cultural change. One woman, a well-respected spinster, told of her early life and the lives of girls today:

When I was young there were not as many dances or serenades. Although you may not believe me, my mother tried to discourage me from spending all my time in the church; she knew that I only went to the masses in order to walk through the streets and perhaps see my novio and to chat with my friends in the church door. So when people say that people were more religious in the past, I laugh. We were not more religious for there was just less movimiento. I only wish I were at the entrance of life, rather than at the exit.

Thus adolescence is always viewed as a trying time and socialization continues throughout this period of a girl's life. Although she has mastered all of the skills necessary, she does not have the full inventory of cultural material at her disposal. She learns about menstruation, for example, and her mother tells her what she needs to know about tabu foods and the like. But she does not learn about sex nor pregnancy until these situations are very real in her own life. Although she is cautioned about boyfriends, little attempt is made to explain that which she is told

to fear. While she knows that some girls have offspring without having been married, the mechanisms of conception are usually unknown. Thus her education, though growing, is still incomplete.

#### Expanding Role Within the Family

Adolescent girls, such as Rosi, assume more and more responsibility within the household as they grow older. Their influence on younger siblings increases; for example, we have seen that Rosi has the right to rebuke her younger brother, José. Often the girls assume an importance close to that of surrogate mother, particularly when there is a great difference in age between the adolescent girl and her younger siblings. In addition to her daily chores, the girl is generally told what to do by her mother, and, in this sense, she is not required to actually assume responsibility, but to follow her mother's directions. It is further assumed that a girl of this age is fully capable of running a household in an emergency, even though she is not viewed as fully adult. For example, if the mother is ill, dies, or must leave town for some reason, the adolescent girl should be able partially to fill her place. In one case, a girl of fourteen not only cooked, washed, and managed the household, but also ran the family store, located within the house; her mother was living in Guadalajara for three years while her brother attended secondary school there. Another girl whose mother died when she was sixteen, and whose father was already dead, reared six- and eight-year-old brothers, taking in washing and ironing in order to support the family.

In addition to contributing to the socialization process of younger siblings, girls of Rosi's age also often begin to help the family economically; fully 50 per cent of girls between the ages of fifteen through



nineteen find some means to increase the family's larder, while 60 per cent of the young women between the ages of twenty through twenty-four contribute economically. The household is the basis unit of the economy and any earnings are given over to one's mother. Rosi, it will be recalled, sewed for others whereby she increased the family's income. Others make tortillas, wash, or iron for other people. Some few have worked as servants in Guadalajara. Girls are encouraged to help financially because the family can always use more money; more importantly, the Cajititlences argue that then a girl will be known as hard-working. Women who claim that they do not wish their daughters to marry still maintain that it is important that a young woman be known as hard-working, for laziness is a reflection upon the family. Although no one will admit that they actively wish their daughters to marry, it is felt that a hard-working girl will be more sought out as a marriage partner and this will reflect well upon the family.

Thus adolescent girls have more important roles to play, both in socializing younger siblings and in helping the family's economy, than do younger girls.

#### Formal Public Life

Adolescence is a period of increasing participation in, and responsibility to, the family; the same can be said of the adolescent girl's obligations toward the community. Girls during adolescence have a greater number of ritual roles than any other group, be they men, women, or children.

It will be recalled that young boys and girls serve apprenticeships in the religious sphere. Adolescent girls proceed one step further

in that they have their own saint to care for--Saint Theresa. Each year the girls of the town take up a collection to sponsor masses for this saint; they are responsible not only for sponsoring the mass, but for singing, organizing the processions, hiring musicians, and buying cohetes (fireworks). The group charged with this obligation is still referred to as the "Catholic Action," a religious group that has held no meetings for the past five years. Thus the adolescent girls of the community carry on the traditions always associated with adolescence. Informants explain that one of the girls always recalls the obligation and, consulting with others, usually relatives, organizes the mass.

Adolescent girls are also apparently willing to assume responsibility generally held by others in the past. The Commemoration of Corpus Christi, along with many other religious celebrations, fell into disfavor with a local priest some fifteen years ago; he believed that the cargos were too expensive and prohibited their observance. In 1970, the celebration of Corpus Christi was reinitiated. In the past the various groups recognized in Cajititlán were each obligated to decorate an altar: married men designed an altar with the crucifix; unmarried men, the Virgin of Guadalupe; married women, Our Lady of Refuge; and unmarried women were responsible for an altar to the Saint Theresa and for an altar to the Christ Child, the representative of boys and girls. Since the celebration was renewed, interest has not been great, and during the past two years, only two groups have designed altars--married and unmarried women. The married women have continued to arrange an altar for Our Lady of Refuge, while the unmarried adolescents have taken on the burden of arranging all of the other altars.

In cooperating in these endeavors, adolescent girls are learning to accomplish tasks which they will perform during their entire lifetimes; after marriage they will join with other women of the town in sponsoring masses during the months of May and June. Cooperation will also be necessary in the preparation of ceremonial meals at baptisms, weddings, and wakes; adolescent girls also start to play a small part in this aspect, although they have no directive role.

While in sponsoring masses they are learning to perform as religious adults, adolescent girls also perform functions within the religious community which are solely their own. It will be recalled that Rosi teaches catechism classes and this is the province of adolescent girls (and some spinsters). Yet few girls can participate in this at any one time. Girls of Rosi's age are also charged with the sweeping of the church. The priest and the nuns draw up a list of thirty groups with three girls in each group. The groups are then assigned a day and each group is to sweep the church on that day on the first, another on the second, etc. This job usually takes two hours and is considered a solemn responsibility for unmarried girls between the ages of fifteen and twenty. In the past, however, this was a mirror of the responsibility given to married women (and often turned over to unmarried daughters) of the community to sweep the atrium; the priest has now hired women to do this since he claims that women would no longer accept the obligation.

Adolescents also sponsor booths at local kermesses (bazaars) used to raise money for the parochial or state schools; this has also traditionally been the duty of members of the Catholic Action group.

The girls buy materials and turn over any profits to the schools. For example, one girl might make sandwiches, set up a booth, and give the money collected, minus her expenses, to the institution at hand. Others sell beer, soft drinks, or other foods. Often these are held in strict alliance with the church and boys and girls still attending catechism class can purchase items with tickets they are given for each attendance. Usually at such affairs the school or church will net some 200 to 300 pesos (\$16 to \$24, U.S.).

Adolescent girls are often called upon to play parts in other secular and sacred aspects of community life. Each year one girl is selected to take the role of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the acting out of her apparition to the Indian, Juan Diego. Others serve as the "Three Marys" who parade through the town on horseback, carrying the standard of the Virgin of Guadalupe. During the fiesta season, honoring the Three Kings, a different girl serves each day as the Virgin Mary in the processional. Others dance or carry standards of the various religious conferences in town. It would be unthinkable to the Cajititlences that a married or non-virginal woman should take such parts; the occasion is viewed with solemnity, and the part is considered a great honor.

On secular occasions, adolescents also have important public roles. During the Independence Day celebrations, a parade is formed and adolescent girls ride on floats on the rear of pick-up trucks. A queen and two princesses are also selected to "reign" over the two-day festivities, held on September fifteenth and sixteenth. These girls ride in the parade, are crowned, and then are publicly

seated on "thrones" (wooden boxes covered with bedspreads) during all the various happenings of the independence celebration--competitive games, dances, etc.

The position of queen apparently diffused into Cajititlán around thirty years ago when men from varying parts of the republic came to construct a canal for irrigation purposes; they convinced local townfolk to follow the custom of electing a queen in Cajititlán. A slate of candidates ran for the office and votes were bought; the proceeds were used to buy the queen's dress and to defray the costs of the celebration. During the past few years, however, the selection of the queen has fallen into the hands of the town mayor, the president of the ejidal organization, and those they wish to consult; unfortunately the townpeople feel that the election system was far superior and, consequently, there is sometimes difficulty in locating a queen. Whomever is selected is criticized as being too old, too ugly, too pompous, or the like, and many parents forbid their daughters to accept the "honor." One year, recently, when a twenty-five year old who was particularly disliked within the community was chosen as queen, so much criticism ensued that her mother decided she should decline; a new queen had to be selected some four days before the celebration.

Thus it has been shown that adolescent girls have many roles in, and responsibilities to, the community, both in a religious and secular sense. Besides taking important parts as Virgins and queens, they cooperate to sponsor masses, help raise money, and teach catechism classes. Although some adolescent males also participate in the parades and processions, they are much fewer in number, and they do not have responsibilities for sponsoring masses within the

community until they have reached full social adulthood after marriage.

### Courtship

It has been remarked that mothers see adolescence as a difficult time, when a girl's emotions are at their tenderest, but there is also a sense in which adolescence is viewed, by adult and adolescent females alike, as a fine time of life. Although the girl has increasing tasks within the home, she is still relatively free of the responsibilities of adulthood; she need not concern herself with problems of an irresponsible husband or a treacherous mother-in-law. She will spend much of her time thinking of her novio, as did Rosi, and, like the current adults, will probably remember courtship as the halcyon days.

Courtship is a time of intense romantic contact and an adolescent boy often waits for hours outside a girl's window or door, hoping that she will come to speak with him for a time. Notes or letters are frequently exchanged, pledging undying love and devotion; the texts for these letters are often copied from books and it is not uncommon for a young man to search out a friend with excellent handwriting to set down his (or the book's) words. The serenade, described in some detail in Rosi's vignette, is the hunting ground for would-be Lotharios and the place where those who have already become novios meet. Dances are also frequent and happy is the young man who is allowed to dance all evening with the girl of his choice, this being indicative that she has accepted him as a novio.

The girl has the upper hand in courtship. If angered, she will not come to the window, or will refuse to give her hand to her boyfriend. The boy sometimes asks a female cousin to talk with the girl. When

either partner wishes to withdraw from the arrangement there are culturally prescribed ways in which the bond is broken, a pattern which foreshadows role behavior of adult men and women. A boy who wishes to discontinue his relationship will stroll around the plaza with another girl. Girls, on the other hand, generally say that their mothers or fathers have learned of the match and feel she is too young to have boyfriends; thus the boy's ego is spared somewhat. This is highly suggestive that the adolescent girl has already learned the subtleties of role behavior which will be required of her in later life, that is, public subservience to males.

When a girl has been jilted or feels another girl is flirting with her beau, she often takes the matter in her own hands. It is very common for such an enraged girl to confront the new girlfriend in public, with a fist-throwing, hair-pulling fight resulting. If possible she will enlist the aid of her sisters and cousins to give the interloper a beating. That this is not a new occurrence in Cajititlán is evidenced by the following story told by doña Petra, a sixty-year-old matron:

When I was a girl of fifteen, I was sweeping the church. When I left I saw my novio's ex-girlfriend and her cousin waiting for me outside the church; I knew they wanted to beat me up. So I ran to don Rafael's store, next to the church, and asked him for a handful of lime. I hid this under my shawl and walked through the atrium. The girls attacked me and started hitting me with their fists. They were surprised when I threw the lime in their eyes, and while they were temporarily blinded, I blacked their eyes and bloodied their noses.

Later my mother found out and asked me why I fought. I told her it was because a boy in town liked me better than he liked the other girl; I didn't tell her he was my novio because she would have been angrier. She spanked me anyway.

Like many other occurrences in Cajititlán, fighting is discouraged but is always greeted with laughter, after the fact. As will be seen, fighting among women is not limited to adolescent girls.

Most Cajititlences agree that at the age of fifteen, a girl is ready for courtship; at the same time they express the hope that their own daughters will wait until a later age to enter into the courtship arena. As was pointed out in Rosi's vignette, it is thought to be disrespectful to one's parents to discuss one's novios. Although parents usually know when their daughters or sons have beaux, all maintain the social fiction of ignorance. Courtship, in specific cases, is considered a fit topic of conversation only with one's peers, or perhaps a young aunt, older sister, or sister-in-law; thus young married women are often sought out for advice to the lovelorn.

Despite the reticence in discussing courtship and the insistence that no one wishes his daughters to begin courting at an early age, a formal rite of passage is associated with the fifteenth birthday. Although the fifteenth birthday has been celebrated for many years, the present-day elaborate ceremony now practiced by some community members was diffused to Cajititlán approximately thirty years ago. The quinceañera (fifteen-year-old) selects fourteen girls to accompany her at a special mass; all, including the quinceañera wear long dresses and heels, although the honored girl wears a white, wedding-type dress. Purists claim that the fourteen girls or damas should be of the same age or younger than the feted one; this ideal standard is not often carried out since one must be careful to pick girls whose families can



afford to purchase material for a long dress. Godparents are selected for the ceremony and must pay for bouquets, music, the cake, and the mass. Musicians go to the girl's home and accompany the girl and her fourteen damas to the church. The girl kneels at the altar, with her godparents behind her, and the damas beside the godparents; the godmother is charged with the responsibility of having accompanied the girl to confession the night before. Upon leaving the church, the girl is often flanked by a chambelán (chamberlain, steward; in this case, a male companion of approximately her age), with the godparents and damas following. A dance and meal generally ensue.

In virtually all respects this ceremony mirrors, structurally, the wedding ceremony, even to the godmother being obligated to accompany the girl to confession. One could easily mistake the processional going to church with that of the marriage processional, and the scene within the church, during the mass, lacks only a bridegroom.

Such an elaborate ceremony is not extremely common in Cajititlán and is the subject of much dispute. Detractors claim that parents sponsoring such endeavors and incurring great expenses such as buying the girl's dress and giving the meal, are stating that their daughters are now ready for marriage. Interestingly enough, those who do give such a fete to their daughters claim that it signifies no such thing and is merely a party. At any rate since this is the first occasion, at least ideally, in which a girl is allowed to attend a dance, it does seem to signal that the adolescent has now reached courtship age.

Another ceremony within Cajititlán is apparently becoming the functional equivalent of the quinceañera celebration. Cajititlán

offered the full six-year primary schooling for the first time in the school year of 1967-1968. Due to the fact that most girls start school late, are kept out, or have to repeat, most are fifteen or sixteen years of age at graduation. The graduation ceremony is quite similar to that of the fifteen-year-old birthday rite in that the girls wear long dresses, with their hair professionally arranged, and heels. This is often the first time since first communion that the girl has had a long dress. In addition there is a special mass, with a party and dinner afterward. Graduation is also a relatively expensive undertaking; in 1972 parents were required to furnish dresses for their daughters and slacks, shirts, and ties for their sons; in addition they had to contribute eighty-five pesos (\$6.80, U.S.) to defray the cost of the mass and dinner. Since the average income for males is twenty-five pesos a day, this figure represents a great expenditure. Although no Cajititlences remarked upon the similarity between graduation and the fifteenth birthday, they do seem somewhat related. Cajititlán has never had any ceremony marking a like period in a boy's life and it could be that primary graduation might perform this function with boys.

The examples adduced thus far show that courtship generally begins at about fifteen years of age and is considered a fine period in a girl's life. Although the romanticism exhibited during this time is not often carried over into later life, nevertheless it can be seen that in acting out the roles of courtship a girl learns role behavior, in public subservience to men. This is the role which will be expected of her in her relations with her husband throughout her life.

## Marriage

Courtship generally stretches to several years, often between three and five, although there are reported cases of couples being novios for ten years or more before marrying. Within the community there is disagreement as to whether brides of today are older or younger than in the past. Marriage figures show a slight trend during the past fifty years for couples to be a bit older at first marriage; that is, the mean, modal, and median ages at first marriage from 1927 to 1931 are approximately one year younger than the same figures for the period from 1967 to 1971. During the past five years in Cajititlán, women married at around twenty years of age, while men married at around twenty-three years of age. Thus most girls spend about five years in the courtship arena before marriage.

Ambivalence toward marriage in Cajititlán is expressed. Women, while affirming the happiness of their marriages, caution against marriage; common complaints are habitually drunk, jealous, or irresponsible husbands, and, perhaps, an even more frequently expressed aversion to unfeeling or deceptive mothers-in-law. This ambivalence is obvious in the common saying, "para comer pescado y tomar estado, se necesita cuidado" ("to eat fish and get married, one must be careful").

Most agree, however, that men need marriage more than women. This idea is phrased on both an emotional and a practical plane. Even men say that while women can be satisfied with their work, both around the house and in commercial endeavors, a man can never be happy without a woman. More pragmatic reasons are also cited. A woman learns at a very early age how to care for a house, to cook, to sew, and to accomplish the domestic tasks which will be necessary during her lifetime. She can

thus care for herself should she never marry. A man, on the other hand, may be busy in the fields and may not have the time nor the ability to minister to his own needs.

Little girls of nine or so often say they will never marry. Girls of Rosi's age also remember the ambivalent attitudes toward marriage, and often wonder whether or not they should marry; Rosi's thoughts about this matter are a case in point. While she wishes to have children and thinks she loves Nacho, she still questions the idea of marriage.

Despite the expressed ambivalence toward marriage, most women do marry, and rationalizations for marriage are various. Often fatalism is involved. The Cajititlence believes that frequently God chooses that one should marry; girls often verbalize the conviction that they will marry "si Dios me toca" ("if God chooses me"). One girl related that if God made her fall in love with a bad man, she would prefer death.

To escape an unfortunate family life is held to be a poor reason for marriage. The girl often finds that she has exchanged one bad life for another, at least in the eyes of the townfolk, and may have a husband or mother-in-law who makes her life just as miserable. By far the most commonly accepted reason for marriage is to provide insurance against loneliness in later life. There is no loneliness as long as one's parents live but the idea is recurrently expressed, "se llegan a morir mis padres y luego, qué hago?" ("my parents will die and then what will I do?"). Particularly in the case of men, the reasoning is used that a person may be ill and will not have "ni quien darle un jarro de agua" ("anyone to give him even a glass of water").

While courtship is a time of intense romantic verbal contact, love is not considered a valid reason for marriage. One should consider the family and everything about one's potential spouse, particularly searching for a man or woman who is a good worker. A desirable wife should know how to care for a house, be loyal to her husband, be able to care for the family's money and always save some amount, no matter how small, in case emergencies arise. A good husband should be an adequate provider, remit money to his wife, and control his vices. At a wedding, the parting advice of the bride's father to the couple was that although he realized that the couple loved each other, love is not the important thing; rather they should have respect for each other and be precavidos (circumspect) in their dealings with both families.

When a young man decides he is ready for marriage, regardless of his age, he discusses the matter with his parents. If they approve the match, his father asks two or three friends or relatives to go ask for the girl's hand. Although there are no formal casamenteros (marriage brokers) in town, some well-respected older men are more often sought out for this duty. They are armed with liquor and go to the girl's house after dark. Generally they consult with both the father and mother of the girl and this occasion is usually accompanied with much wailing and gnashing of teeth, even though the girl's parents might be in favor of the match. Both act surprised, still carrying on the social fiction that they were not even aware that the girl had a boyfriend. One of two results can occur as a consequence of this meeting. The girl's father always sets a plazo (waiting period) for

giving the answer. The most common plazo is three months. If, however, the young man has a poor reputation, the father might set a waiting period for as much as a year, thus indicating his displeasure at the possibility of the match. It is hoped that the young man will tire of waiting and find another novia or that the daughter will realize the stupidity of wishing to marry such a lazy, drunken, or irresponsible man. It is further desired that a young man, being thus rebuffed, will see the error of his ways and become a more suitable partner before the termination of the waiting period. If he is willing to delay for such a length of time, parents say they are helpless in the matter and allow the couple to marry. Local folk opinion, however, demonstrates that the girl's parents are often correct in their feelings about the young man and girls who marry such men usually lead unhappy lives.

During the more usual three-month wait, the young woman becomes the focus of much attention. She seems to enjoy this role and is very coy when asked whether or not she will welcome the young man's hand. All of her cousins flock around her and each attempts to be the one to find out if she will accept. Often the girl plays the role to its utmost, one day stating she will marry and, the next, denying that she will. It is during this time, too, that the mother takes a very active socializing role, explaining to the girl what her duties will be, and, often, cautioning her against marriage. Sexually, most girls are still told nothing, save that they must do what their husband wishes at night. Several mothers have stated that they do take this opportunity to explain to their daughters, "lo que es el hombre y lo que es la mujer" (about men and women), but most assert that this type of discussion would make them embarrassed.

The girl has generally already made up her mind before the first visit takes place, for the young man consults her in taking this step. If her parents disapprove the match, she has two alternatives: she may accept her family's decision or may allow herself to be stolen away by the young man. The robo (stealing away process) will be discussed later in this section.

The plazo, as a social arrangement, insures that a male will not be publicly offended. If the suit is to be declined, people feel it should be done at the earliest possible time. Thus little is said if the match is not to be; rather the girl's father talks with one of the men who came to make the offer, informing him that the suit will be turned down. As the day approaches signaling the end of the plazo, it is assumed that the match will be made. Thus, as the plazo comes to an end, preparations start, presided over by the young man's mother. On the evening signaling the end of the plazo, "el sí" ("the yes" or the answer) is to be held.

Female relatives of the young man bring fruit to his house after dark; the boy's mother has prepared alcoholic fruit punch in liter bottles, and some relatives bring tequila and rum to augment this supply. By 7:30 p.m., all invited participants have gathered at the boy's home. Meanwhile, in the young woman's household, preparations are being made to greet the guests; flowers generally decorate every room, and benches, usually borrowed from the town hall and the girl's relatives, are brought in. Normally the girl herself hides away, fixing her hair and dressing; these young women often say that they feel shame and therefore do not want to see anyone.

Around eight o'clock, the young man's male relatives flock to the girl's house, carrying bottles of liquor; sometimes the young man himself is present and sometimes he joins the group later. These men retire to a room, with male relatives of the bride-to-be. For at least thirty minutes, talk centers around other matters while the young man's relatives serve liquor and cigarettes to the young woman's relatives; they might discuss a soccer game, happenings around town, or the like. It is the responsibility of the senior male of the entourage who first asked for the girl's hand to bring up the topic of the evening. Usually this is the signal for the young man's father to speak up, praising the selection made by his son. At this point the girl's father suggests that he, the boy's father, and the bridegroom-to-be retire to another room; often he asks his wife to join them. There the young man is given advice and told how he must be a good husband and father; the bride's parents stress that he must treat their daughter well. The assembled men continue to drink tequila and rum while women, girls, and boys drink the alcohol punch in the kitchen and patio; this, too, has been provided by the male's family. It is interesting to note that little girls consume much more punch than do boys; it is hypothesized that since punch is regarded as a "woman's drink," little boys who are not yet allowed to imbibe tequila forsake punch as evidence of their maleness.

After about an hour of giving advice, the girl is called upon to enter the room and give her answer. Her presence is the signal for mounting excitement, and word soon spreads that she has agreed. One of the boy's relatives leaves the house and shoots off two rockets,



notifying the young man's female relatives, awaiting at his house, that the suit has been accepted. They group together carrying trays, buckets, and cooking dishes filled with fruit, along with additional punch and tequila. As they file into the house, they present the fruit and drink to the bride's mother, joining in the festivities with the other women present. The amount of fruit thus brought is symbolic, somewhat, of a bride's worth, and talk soon fills the town about how much was given.

After the girl says "yes" she often disappears again, claiming that she is ashamed to be seen. The other guests drink and talk, with many, both male and female, drunk before the *sí* ends, usually around midnight.

After the girl has said "yes," a date is set for the formal presentation of the couple, the third step in the marriage process. This is generally held the following Saturday. As is the case for the *sí*, the expenses of the presentation (presentación) are borne by the bridegroom's family. The presentation may follow two forms since this is the opportunity for the priest to talk with the couple. Either the couple goes to the priest's house or he is brought to the girl's household; since the priest must be paid to go to the bride's house, this is more prestigious. In any case he speaks with the boy first and then the girl; again giving them advice about being good spouses, in addition to cautioning them about the religious sacredness of marriages. In either case a dance ensues, and it is the responsibility of the groom's family to provide all liquor and soft drinks and to pay the band. The spatial segregation by sex is not evident in the presentation, due, undoubtedly, to the fact that it is a dance.

Segregation does exist, however, roughly along age grades. Youths cluster together while older men and women sit and talk. As the evening wears on, the segregation breaks down as the men have more to drink. Then the older men begin to seek out adolescent girls with whom to dance; husbands and wives do not generally dance together. Sometimes young men are also able to coax older women into dancing; particularly if two women are intoxicated, they might start to dance with each other. Usually these affairs last until the small hours of the morning.

The following three Sundays, the priest reads the banns, after which the couple may marry. A date is set for the wedding and preparations become very important. First the bridegroom's mother accompanies the bride to Guadalajara where a white wedding dress is purchased or rented and paid for by the bridegroom's family. The boy's baptismal godmother is called upon to purchase a party dress, also given to the bride.

The couple decide upon wedding godparents, usually a married couple. They are responsible for providing a wedding meal, paying for three or four hours of music, and with furnishing a bridal bouquet for the young woman. In addition the girl also selects five godmothers, of about her age, who usually also serve as bridesmaids. One provides an additional bouquet to be left on the altar of the church; another supplies the mancuerna (lasso of marriage) which is draped around the couple during the wedding mass, thus signifying their union; the third purchases thirteen gold twenty centavo pieces, called the arras, which are given to the bride during the ceremony; the fourth godmother buys

wedding bands for both the bride and groom while the final godmother supplies the wedding prayer book and rosary carried by the bride.

On the day before the wedding, relatives and comadres of the groom's mother gather at her house to kill chickens and make nixtamal (corn soaked in lime for making tortillas) for the next day. Generally meals supplied by the godparents (usually a breakfast) and by the bride's parents (usually a supper) are lighter meals and do not take as much work. To the groom's mother falls the most responsibility for the wedding. Very early on the morning of the wedding, the same women reassemble where they cook the chickens, making two kinds of mole (sauce); prepare rice; and make tortillas. The groom's mother is in command, directing the activities of the other women, and often relegating responsibility for various dishes to her sisters. Most often the female relatives of the groom do not attend the ceremony itself since they are too occupied with the preparation of the wedding meal.

As the hour of the appointed mass approaches, the bride begins to don her wedding dress while her female relatives gather at the house. Musicians, who are hired by the groom's family, come to the girl's house. There they line up, in this manner: the bride, flanked by her father on one side and her godmother on the other; the damas (bridesmaids, in this case); the band; and female relatives of the bride, including her mother. (Male relatives are already seated at the church.) Waiting for them at the church steps are the groom and the godfather. The priest meets the bridal party at the church door and the wedding party lines up. The order of entry into the church

is not fixed, although the bride always walks with her father and precedes the groom.

At the church altar, the party is arranged in the same manner as that reported for the fifteenth birthday mass; the only difference is that the groom kneels at his bride's side. During the ceremony, the godmothers who are also damas have the responsibility of giving their contributions to the couple; at one point the bride is given her rosary and book, at another the mancuerna is placed around the couple, etc. .

At the end of the ceremony, the bride ascends the altar and places a bouquet there; no one can explain the significance of this act. As the wedding party leaves the church, rice is thrown at the couple. This custom has been in vogue for only the last forty years and is said to signify "good luck"; the origin is unknown by the Cajititlences although it probably diffused from Guadalajara. The wedding party, now led by the young couple, proceed to the godparents' house. Since couples are usually married at the early mass, the wedding breakfast is served then. All begin to drink and toast the new couple, and the couple dances the first dance. There is little formality on such occasions and the bridal couple seem soon forgotten in the drinking and revelry that follow. Around noon, the party goes to the groom's house. Here a formal, sit-down, meal is served. All of the groom's female relatives, including adolescents, are involved in the meal--the older women in preparation, and the younger women in serving. It is important that the godparents and girl's relatives, both male and female, are served first and the bride's female relatives

are not required nor expected to help. Finally the party goes to the bride's house, where a light supper is served. This supper and the music played at this time represent the only expenses incurred by the bride's family.

Mexican law requires that in order for the marriage to be legal, a civil ceremony must be held before the church marriage. Usually this is not carried out in practice and the couple is often civilly married at the bride's house, at the close of the day; sometimes they are not civilly married until the next day. Following the civil ceremony, an important ritual, the benedición (benediction), is carried out. The couple kneels and the sign of the cross is made over them by the two sets of parents and the godparents. This is then followed by the compadres' abrazo (embrace) between the godparents and the two sets of parents; this act signifies that the godparents have become compadres of the bride's and groom's parents; although the godparents become compadres of the two sets of parents, the parents are not each other's compadres.

In the past, the bride was turned over to her godparents and resided several days in her godparents' home before going to live with her husband; this could be termed "transition" in Van Gennep's (1969:10) scheme of rites of passage. This custom has fallen into disuse but it is still very common for the girl to remain with her parents for several days following the ceremonies. During this time she and her husband act as novios still, with the young man going to speak with his new bride at her window or compound door. Following this period the groom's mother and godmother go to the bride's home and call for the bride and her things; then she generally moves into the groom's natal household.

By analyzing the elements of the marriage ceremony, several themes become apparent. It is said by the Cajititlences that when a girl marries, she now belongs to a "new family," and now her major responsibilities are to her husband's family. Structurally this seems borne out since almost all expenses are paid by the groom's family. It is also important to note the cooperation and participation required of women during the ceremonies. The groom's female relatives bring fruit, prepare elaborate meals, and are evident in almost every aspect of the ceremony itself. Although participation of the bride's female relatives does not require as much cooperation, they do rally around the girl on her wedding day, giving her advice and helping her dress. Thus women view their participation as absolutely essential.

Although the above description of the marriage process is the ideal one, census data indicate that nearly 40 per cent of the marriages in Cajititlán are begun with a robo (literally "robbery"). The robo occurs in three cases: 1) the young man asks his father if he can marry the girl and is refused; 2) the girl's hand is asked for, but the match is opposed by her parents; and 3) the girl is so young that the young man knows his suit will not be accepted. In the robo, the girl is stolen away, often from a dance or party, and placed, for safekeeping, in the home of one of the boy's relatives or in the home of his baptismal godparents. After the girl has passed one night there, she is considered damaged merchandise; as virginity at marriage is highly prized in Cajititlán, and it is assumed that the girl is no longer a virgin, she would have difficulty finding another husband. Again a delegation is sent to the girl's home, although this time much

talk centers around the lack of respect evidenced by the boy and the fact that he wants to do the honorable thing and marry the girl. Generally agreement is reached, after much outraged behavior by the girl's parents, and the couple is married. The ceremonies surrounding such marriages are similar to, though generally less elaborate than, those already described, but "el sí" is absent, and the girl is married in a blue or pink dress, rather than the traditional white.

It is considered a propitious sign if the bride's parents ask that she spend the night before the wedding in her natal household, thus indicating that her parents have reconciled themselves to the marriage. All agree that the preferred mode of marriage is for the bride to leave for the wedding mass from her own home. It is sometimes the case that the girl's parents still avidly oppose the match and refuse to take part in the ceremonies; they do not prepare the wedding supper and the bride's father appoints a stand-in, usually the girl's baptismal godfather, to give the girl away.

If it is the case that the young man's parents have refused to ask for the girl's hand, there is usually more difficulty. Since it is unthinkable that a man or woman might marry without their parents' permission, action is stymied, and the girl's parents are put in the awkward position of trying to force the boy's parents hand. Since the most common reason for refusing a boy's request for marriage is that the girl is a known non-virgin, opposition is great, for the boy's parents argue that the family will lose honor in encouraging such a match. Often the couple does not marry, but merely lives in consensual union, although the birth of a child will sometimes

cause a rapprochement. In one case a man waited some twenty years to marry his common-law wife, after his parents' death.

Although the girl is generally in full agreement with the robo, cases are present where the girl was actually taken by force; Foster (1967:116) also reports this for Tzintzuntzan. These occurrences are extremely rare and there are but three women in town who were truly abducted. Yet consider the plight of d. Vicenta, a widow, who tells the following story:

I was but fourteen years of age, and not old enough even to have a novio, but I did. He was eighteen and wanted to ask my parents if he could marry me. I refused and one day as I was walking in the plaza, he grabbed me and gave me a severe susto [fright]. He put me on his horse and took me to Jocotopec, a town nearby. There he forced me to sleep with him and then brought me back to Cajititlán, placing me in the home of his godfather. When my parents learned what had happened, they were very angry. My father sent a woman who worked in our store to see if I was all right and not beaten up. When Clara came to speak with me, I told her I didn't want to get married. She told my father this and he sent back word that I was no longer of use to him since I was now a calabaza hueca [broken-up squash, i.e., a non-virgin]. Darío and I were married within a month.

Thus it has been shown that although there is much ambivalence toward marriage in Cajititlán, most people do marry. Parents particularly caution their daughters against marriage and the prevalence of the robo as a marriage form is indicative that the parents' desires that their daughters not marry is more than mere social fiction. In spite of this, there is more ritual attached to the marriage ceremony than any other similar life crisis within the community, and the roles acted out by women are very significant.



Summary

In this chapter we have seen that while adolescence is viewed as a difficult time, particularly in mother-daughter relationships, it is also seen, particularly in the area of courtship, as a time of great freedom from responsibility. It has also been demonstrated, however, that the young woman has increasing tasks within the household and is a particularly strong agent in the socialization of her younger siblings. The girl, herself, is not fully socialized and must learn about such matters as menstruation and, perhaps just before marriage, sex.

In addition it is evident that adolescent girls also have increasing responsibilities to the community and have important public functions to fulfill both to the sacred and secular aspects of village life.

Although the girl, immediately following marriage, has mastered many skills and knows many cultural facts, she is not considered a social adult, and the full inventory of cultural knowledge is still denied to her; this will become evident in the chapter to follow on pregnancy and childbirth.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The original orthography has been maintained.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, AND INFANT CARE

Pregnancy, childbirth, and infant care are considered most crucial areas of feminine knowledge by the married women of Cajititlán; these spheres are considered almost exclusively the domain of adult women, although men and unmarried women do learn some, but not all, of the details surrounding such events and practices. They do provide a common basis for understanding among women of the community, and are often topics of conversation when women gather in kitchens, the common meeting ground for women.

In this chapter we shall examine pregnancy and childbirth in terms of common beliefs of the women of Cajititlán; more importantly, these will be related as episodes in the attainment of full social adulthood for women. How and from whom a woman gains this information is of critical importance in understanding the cultural maturation process.

We shall consider first the folk theory of conception and demonstrate its wider application within the community. Then we shall discuss the pregnancy itself, with emphasis on post-marriage socialization of young women. Childbirth and post-natal care will be the topic of the following section, while recent changes will then be examined. The baptism ceremony will be analyzed in terms of participation of a group of actors, in the final section.

### Theory of Conception

Foster (1967:130) has argued that "in a manner of Latin American communities blood is seen quite specifically as a Limited Good." Cajititlán is no exception to this generality. In order to understand the local theory of conception, one must examine, in some detail, the view of blood commonly held by the Cajititlences. Blood is considered the one element which must be considered above all in the area of health. Strong blood means health, vitality, and an active sex drive, while weak blood indicates the opposite. Yet blood figures even more strongly in local belief than just as an indicator of health. Menstruation is seen as an illness since the woman is thought to be losing blood which causes debilitation of the body; one midwife opined that women menstruate because they are being punished by God and this is one means of keeping them weaker than men. Blood is also said to nurture a child in the womb and thus pregnancy is also thought of as an infirmity; in one case this researcher heard a woman state, "ya me enfermé porque no me enfermé" ("I got sick because I didn't get sick"). That is to say, the woman was stating that she knew she was pregnant because she was no longer menstruating. After giving birth it is believed that the mother's milk is also made from blood and thus nursing is debilitating to a woman. For men the only bodily substance universally held to be formed from blood is semen and, for this reason, it is thought that too much sexual intercourse will cause weakness in the man for he will be losing too much blood.

This concept of blood is closely intertwined with the process of conception. Conception is believed to be the result of the co-mingling

of the father's blood in the form of semen and the mother's blood which she would usually menstruate but now coagulates to form the child. While during gestation, the foetus is nurtured with the mother's blood, the father may contribute by continuing to have intercourse with the mother. This belief is so strong that one cause of homosexuality is said to be that the father did not use his wife during the pregnancy and the child is thus completely nurtured from his mother's blood. In any case, in spite of a tendency toward initial virilocality and the preeminence of the paternal surname, offspring are considered to be more the product of the mother, who gives more of her blood in nurturing the foetus and nursing the infant. The belief that the mother is more important is also recognized in the kinship system, for two offspring of the same mother and a different father are recognized to be full siblings while two offspring who share the same father but different mothers are half-siblings. This is explained both in terms of the relative amounts of blood contributed by both parents and also to a fact which is quite obvious to the Cajititlences: two children born of the same mother were carried by her and thus "lived" in the same place for the first nine months of their lives.

Mothers frequently remark, "este niño yo lo crié con la sangre que corre por mis venas" ("I raised this child with the blood which runs through my veins"), referring to the blood she contributed both in nurturing the foetus and in nursing. In fact, two children who nurse from the same wet-nurse are considered siblings and cannot marry; whether this ideal is followed was difficult to determine

since, although no informants could think of two hermanos de la leche (milk-siblings) marrying, they all expressed assurance that a dispensation could be secured from the church for such a marriage. That nursing is also considered an important source of blood for the child is indicated by the practice of calling the wet-nurse "mother" regardless of what kin ties apply, if any.

The knowledge of this folk scheme relating blood to conception is not the secret domain of women; adult men know the belief system while adolescents, who may be ignorant of the mechanisms of the sex act, have some idea that they are more related to their mothers, and know that the mother's milk is made from blood. Although this is general knowledge, we shall now examine areas which are the almost exclusive domain of women.

#### Pregnancy and Beliefs Surrounding It

Soon following marriage, young women usually become pregnant. It is sometimes the case that a girl does not realize she is pregnant and must ask her mother (or, in some cases, her mother-in-law) why she is no longer menstruating, the most commonly recognized sign of pregnancy in Cajititlán. When her mother or mother-in-law becomes aware of what has happened, the young woman finds that a whole new world of cultural knowledge is opened to her and learns of the many restrictions surrounding pregnancy. The first pregnancy is a time of continuing instruction in beliefs surrounding this important aspect of the culture. The young woman also tells her husband and he may take it upon himself to seek knowledge from his own mother;

particularly during the first pregnancy men are said to be very affectionate and concerned for their wife's welfare.

A public health nurse, herself a native of Cajititlán once remarked that, "it is curious that women here don't take any care during a pregnancy, and take too much care of themselves after giving birth." She was speaking, of course, of her efforts to convince women that they should see a doctor during their pregnancies. In the Cajititlences view, however, much care is taken during pregnancy to prevent aberrations in the child, to prevent natural abortions, and to insure that the infant will be healthy.

The mother usually assumes the solemn responsibility of passing this information to her daughter. Many foods are prohibited, some for their properties which might cause sickness to the mother and child, and some for their propensity to disfigure the child. The foods which are tabu during menstruation are also tabu during pregnancy and are said to cause "cold" in the womb, thus resulting in severe pains; milk and the nopal cactus are included in this list. Certain meats should not be eaten during the pregnancy since they are felt to affect the skin of the child. Eating fish, birds, and chickens is to be avoided since all are said to cause hérpis, a disease in which the child's skin is very dry and cracked. This is related to sympathetic magic since such animals have skins which are puckered and dry. In one case where a mother found her pregnant daughter eating chicken skin she rebuked her saying, "your child will have skin like a chicken."

In spite of these tabu foods a young woman is told she should satisfy any cravings (antojos) she might have, unless they are on the

forbidden list. If so she should eat a piece of sugar and take three swallows of water in the name of the Trinity (some say in the name of the Three Kings); since not satisfying cravings is said to cause abortions, this will avoid such problems. Mothers are also expected to tell their sons to see that their wives' cravings are satisfied. Thus this area is fully known to all adult members of the community. Since pregnancy is not discussed between non-related members of the village community, and care is often taken to avoid being seen in this condition, one informant told of her shame when a man tried to help her satisfy what he thought was a craving:

When I was waiting for Roberto [pregnant], d. Trini came selling ice cream. I went out to buy some, not because of a craving but because I always bought. D. Trini said that he had run out, but then gave me a good look. He scraped to the very bottom to get some for me. Many times this part is salty and I told him I would wait until the next day. He kept insisting and finally said, "I am going to talk frankly with you, this isn't for you." In other words, the ice cream was for my unborn child. I was very ashamed.

Other factors might contribute to a spontaneous abortion. Women should not carry heavy objects nor jump, and should rest some each day to avoid a miscarriage or spontaneous abortion, known as mala cama (bad bed). Eclipses are especially feared in that they are said to cause deformities or spontaneous abortions. The solar eclipse of 1970 was apparently a time of great concern for pregnant women and their husbands in Cajititlán. Carrying something made of metal, such as keys, and using a red belt or red piece of cloth is said to negate the effects of the eclipse. One woman consulted her midwife before the solar eclipse and was told about the necessity for such items. When the midwife saw her husband during the eclipse, she questioned



him as to whether his wife had followed her advice; since it was the woman's first pregnancy, the husband said he was not satisfied with merely following the formula to the letter. Therefore, he related that his wife was in the bed with machetes, axes, iron rods, and hoes and was covered with a red blanket "para que no me vaya a eclipsar" ("so she won't get eclipsed on me"; that is, "so she won't abort or have a deformed child"). The fact that the child was born without difficulty attested, in the midwife's mind, to the efficacy of her prescription..

Deformities or problems in the child's or mother's health are also attributed to geophagy, widely practiced by pregnant women. The desire to eat dirt or clay is viewed as a manía (mania) and is discouraged by the young woman's mother. Although the woman is driven by a craving, nothing seems particularly efficacious in ridding women of this desire; the eating of sugar and drinking of three swallows of water is considered ineffective. Eating dirt is believed to cause worms in the mother and the unborn child, an affliction which merely increases the problems. The worms want more dirt on which to feed and thus the woman's desire for dirt increases.

If the pregnant woman is discovered with this mania, conferences are likely to result in how to rid the woman of the problem. One man whose wife was continually picking bits of adobe off the walls to eat was told by his mother to place dirt from the cemetery on the walls; this cure is regularly used to stop children from eating dirt but is viewed by many as ineffective with women. Others substitute magnesia for dirt in the hopes that this will satisfy the craving and not harm

the mother or child. Geophagy, then, although considered harmful is also viewed as very difficult to treat.

Besides learning of methods to prevent abortions and deformities in children, the young woman during her first pregnancy must also be instructed in varying items which will reduce the chance of a difficult delivery. She is taught not to eat supper since it is believed that her body will not be able to utilize this nutrition and all of the food will go directly to the baby's head, thus enlarging it and making for a more difficult birth. She is also told by her mother, a midwife, or her mother-in-law to regularly place firewood in the fire knots first, to insure that the baby will be born head first.

In addition to methods which insure health of the mother and infant, other cultural beliefs center around prediction of the sex of the unborn child. It is frequently asserted that the sex of the child is determined by the strength of the parents' blood and, therefore, sex drive. If the man's sex drive is stronger, the child will be female, while if the woman's is stronger, a male will result. Informants agree that although single families have both male and female children this is the result of varying strengths in the blood and that normally there will be a preponderance of one sex, indicating that the opposite parent's sex drive is stronger. Some even go so far as to state that since men prefer male children they will search for a woman who is excitable, thus indicating a strong sex drive. At any rate, prediction of the unborn child's sex is not left to speculation about the relative sex drives of his parents. Rather, other signs are taken as indicative. It is said that if the woman's abdomen protrudes, the child will be male,

while if it spreads, the child will be female. Furthermore local beliefs have it that male children are fully developed some forty days after conception while female children are not so developed until after the sixth month. While all women attest to this fact, virtually all even affirm that they have witnessed miscarriages which bear this belief out. D. Selidonia, a midwife, explained this in terms of two miscarriages by a niece of hers:

When Juana had her first mala cama, it came at one month. The baby was fully formed, and even had fingernails; it was a boy. I baptized the baby and it was buried, as an angelito, in the cemetery. Her second mala cama was at two months and the child looked like a piece of meat, nothing more; it was obviously a girl. Since the foetus did not look like a person, it was not baptized and was buried in the corral.

Thus if a woman feels movement at forty days or so, she is told that her child must be a boy, since girl children of that age are not sufficiently formed to move.

While the public health nurse's avowal that women do not care for themselves during their pregnancies is correct, in her terms, most of the women within the community feel that they do everything in their power to insure that their health is guarded and also that of their child.

### Childbirth

Although a young pregnant woman is told a myriad of things relating to her pregnancy, her mother usually tells her nothing of the rigors of childbirth. Women are said to suffer in childbirth because "that's the way the Virgin suffered" and mothers agree that they would only frighten their daughters by explaining the pain they

will endure. This, then, is an additional case where a woman is told only what she needs to know at a certain point in her life, and no more.

Particularly during the first pregnancy, the midwife is often consulted during the pregnancy itself; after giving birth once, she is usually not called until labor itself starts. Although the woman's husband may be present during the delivery, it is more common for only the midwife, the woman herself, her mother, and her mother-in-law to be in the bedroom, where the child is generally delivered.

If the delivery is an uncomplicated one, there is little activity besides the general work of delivering the child. The midwife massages the woman's stomach to get the baby in place, and must exercise great care in guiding the child since there is danger of tearing. If it is a first pregnancy, the woman is instructed not to cry out since this is believed to cause "aire" (bad air) to enter the woman's lungs and cause sickness in the woman. One informant stated that during her first delivery she was "dying of fright" and started to scream; her mother placed a shawl in her mouth, telling her to bite on that instead of screaming.

In the case of difficult deliveries or other problems, there are methods to facilitate giving birth. If labor is sustained, midwives often prepare a fire and place water and sugar in a pot over it. When this begins to boil, the woman squats over the mixture, letting the vapor, according to local belief, enter into her womb; this is said to bring the birth more quickly. If this fails, a doctor may be sent for; while public health supplies a doctor for Cajititlán, he does not live in the community and oftentimes a male member of the

family will travel to Guadalajara to secure the needed medical personnel, or the woman will be taken to a hospital in the city. Some informants claim that community members are stupid and take unnecessary chances when all avenues of knowledge should be explored. Thus, one woman told of her attempts to keep her sister alive:

My sister, Esther, had two midwives accompanying her when she was giving birth to Licho. They sent for me when she got very sick and was not moving at all. I hurried over and found that the child was not moving either because the pains had stopped. I felt an obligation to do something, especially since our mother was dead. I sent for a doctor who said he thought she would die. He gave her some medicine and told me to give Esther a spoonful every half-hour, and if she didn't deliver within an hour and a half, she would surely be dead. I paid the doctor since I had sent for him. My blood was boiling and I scolded the midwives for not calling a doctor sooner. Then I scolded Esther's husband and he replied he didn't have much money; I told him that this was no excuse when his wife's life was at stake.

After an hour and a half, nothing had happened. Then I remembered that swinging a woman in a blanket sometimes makes the birth easier. Esther's husband, the two midwives, and I each took a corner of the blanket and started to swing her around; she promptly gave birth.

When a woman has had a difficult childbirth it is common for her to claim that she will have no more children. Older women of the community laugh at this since they assert that the pain of giving birth is soon forgotten in the joy of having the child.

As soon as the child enters the world, attention is focused toward him. The cord is immediately cut and the midwife holds the child in her hands, throwing it up and down. Then she rubs him from his neck, down his back, to his buttocks. Finally she gives him three spansks on the buttocks, to start his breathing. Then she turns her attention to the cord, tying it and burning the end closed with candle

wax. Local belief has it that the wax should be from a candle burned by the pregnant woman during her pregnancy, asking the saints for an easy delivery. The cord is then doubled over and a piece of wax from the same candle is dropped on it. Although this practice continues, no one knows the reason for using this particular candle; one informant did offer the opinion that this was to thank the saints, but stated she was unsure if her response was correct.

Attention is then centered again on the woman herself. She is rubbed with oil because it is believed that her pores were opened during the childbirth; this is a dangerous condition because air can enter and do her harm, and the oil is said to close the pores. Concern is evidenced if the placenta is not expelled rapidly; the most common antidote for a retained placenta is forcing the woman to eat lard, causing her to gag and thus expel the placenta. It is believed that the placenta must be disposed of properly in order to protect the health of the mother. The young woman's mother or, at times, the midwife, take on this responsibility after the birth has occurred.

A hole is dug, usually at the hearth, and wood and alcohol are placed inside, and ignited. When the fire is hot, the placenta is thrown inside and allowed to burn; the hole is then covered up. If this practice is not carried out, the new mother's abdomen is said to suffer from "cold" and extreme pains or entueertos result. These can be treated by placing burlap bags over the woman's stomach but it is felt that prevention of such pains is preferable. One informant, in telling of the importance of proper disposal of the placenta, said,

When I had my second child, I presumed to be very catrina ["citified"] and went to Guadalajara to the hospital. After the birth, a nurse gathered up the placenta and other secretions and flushed them down the toilet; I suffered from severe pains and knew it was because the placenta had not been burned. Imagine that a woman with so much education wouldn't know about such things! I had the rest of my children in Cajititlán.

Thus, childbirth is particularly fraught with terror for a woman during her first delivery although she is surrounded by experienced women who help her through the ordeal. The birth is surrounded by a wealth of cultural knowledge which is said to help facilitate difficult births and insure the health of the mother and the child.

#### Post-Natal Care of Mother and Infant

While most midwives are paid seventy-five pesos (\$6.00, U.S.) for their part in the delivery, their responsibilities do not end until five days later. After three days the midwife must go to "levantarla" or place the woman in a sitting position; the midwife also binds the young mother's abdomen with sashes which she will wear during the forty days following the birth. On the fifth day, the woman is allowed to begin to take a few steps, but must await a massage from the midwife before starting this. After two to three weeks she is allowed to bathe; the child is sometimes bathed immediately following birth but often is first bathed when his mother takes her first bath.

During the entire forty-day period some believe that a woman should eat only toasted tortillas and atole with chocolate, to increase the flow of her milk. Others argue that a woman should eat chicken soup, bread, and drink plenty of milk while avoiding fresh fruits, beans, tomatoes, soft drinks, and beer.

All agree that the most important restrictions immediately following childbirth are to refrain from work and from sexual intercourse. One woman said that her mother told her not to even sleep in the same bed with her husband for forty days following birth since she might be tempted to have intercourse with him. Having intercourse before the forty-day period is over is said to provoke a severe diarrhea from which women have been known to die.

Mothers instruct daughters in the proper care they should take with their infants. Children are not nursed until three days after birth and are fed oregano tea during this time. The colostrum is removed by massaging the breasts and should never be fed to the child. If a woman does not have sufficient milk, a mixture of oil and chocolate is smeared on her back and she drinks atole with chocolate. Women are cautioned to follow strict rules regarding the nursing of their children. If she is angered or frightened, she must not nurse the baby since the milk will be sour and cause the child to be afflicted with colic. If she must throw the milk away she is instructed to dispose of it in water and never throw it on the ground. It is said that if milk is disposed of in the latter manner, the woman's nipples will chap and crack although no one knows the reason that this happens. While there is also a tabu against intercourse while the woman is nursing, this is not as strong and is viewed as a near impossibility by the women of Cajititlán. One woman explained,

The husband and wife cannot enjoy each other for three months before the birth; then they must wait at least forty days after the birth. After that time, they just can't wait anymore, and women want it just as much as men.



Much attention also focuses around the umbilical cord of the child; this should be allowed to fall off naturally. It is referred to as a nerve and it is said that the child breathes through the cord as well as breathing normally and any interference will result in his death. When this falls off, it is placed in a hole in the wall or on the inside of a pillow to assure that the child will never forget his mother. It is interesting that some people continue this custom without knowledge of the reason for doing so; witness the following excerpt from field notes:

I asked d. Pachita if she had ever heard of putting the child's naval cord in a pillow, forgetting to mention the other possibility. She said that she hadn't. I asked what she had done with her children's cords. She replied she had placed them in a hole in the wall. I inquired why and she replied that her mother had told her to do so but had not explained the reason for doing this.

As the child grows older, the mother and mother-in-law are continually consulted. The young mother is told to take care to bring in the diapers from the line before dew falls since this will cause a rash in the child. She is instructed to give the child his first food at six months of age--usually tortillas with salt. She is further told not to cut her child's fingernails, but rather to bite them off, until the child is one year of age; similarly a child's hair should not be cut until the age of one year is attained. Breaking of either rule is said to result in bad eyesight.

Thus women learn the proper care they should take of themselves and their infants following the birth; the roles of one's mother and the midwife are important in that they are charged with explaining each step.

Recent Changes in Pre- and Post-Natal Care

Recently efforts have been made to increase the pre-natal care, in modern terms, and insure that proper steps are taken to make childbirth more sanitary. The most obvious innovator in this area is a public health nurse, Lola Sebastián. Lola is a well-respected spinster of thirty-two, who first started administering injections at the age of fifteen. When the health center was begun she was told that the government would pay for her to attend a six-month course in nursing; in order to qualify, she had to have a primary-school certificate. This presented a problem since Lola had finished but four grades in school; she began to study and received a primary school certificate through a special examination, thus enabling her to enter the nursing course. Since that time she has completed an additional six-month course and is now skilled in such areas as suturing and childbirth. In some respects, no better choice could have been made for the town nurse. She has a wealth of fictive kin, for she and her brother have long been sought out to serve as baptismal godparents. She can thus use these relationships instrumentally to get women to follow her "new" ideas of pregnancy and child care. No breath of scandal has ever touched her life. Her major difficulty has been the fact that some women do not wish her to deliver their babies since she is unmarried and they feel shame in talking with her about such matters; thus most women are still attended by midwives. She has had much success, however, in convincing local midwives that, for example, the scissors used in cutting the baby's umbilical cord should be sterilized; although most women still prefer the midwives,

she does deliver a number of children within the community and is often called as a consultant if the delivery is a difficult one. Using her personal magnetism and her aforementioned compadrazgo ties, Lola has had a very high success rate in vaccinating children against polio, diphtheria, tetanus, and tuberculosis.

Each doctor in Mexico must complete a year of social service, during which time he writes a thesis. Thus, Cajititlán, as part of the rural health service, is supplied with a doctor who holds office hours in the health center six days a week. The success of each doctor is usually determined by how well he can talk with the people and inspire their confidence. Although most doctors are enthusiastic when entering the community, as the year grows to a close, they regularly become less interested in the village, perhaps due to the pressures of writing a thesis, and the time they spend each day becomes less and less. Thus, Lola provides an important link between the health center and the community. Each year when the new doctor arrives, she is the one who teaches him how to keep the records, introduces him to the community members, and tries to instruct him in how to work with the people of Cajititlán.

In 1969, a nutritionist who travels around to several health centers, Lola, and the doctor of the time, conceived of the idea of instigating a "Mother's Club" to tie in with a system of complimentary food distribution. The "Programa de alimentación complementaria rural" allows for the distribution of dry milk, liquid butter, and dried fish to mothers with children under five years of age and to pregnant women. As part of the program the children are weighed each month and are given a physical examination every three months.

The club was organized in order to give the women instruction in feeding themselves, their children, and in hygiene; there are currently sixty members in the club. Lola, the nutritionist, and various doctors give talks to the group and demonstrations are also made in the preparation of the foods. The dried fish, for example, requires soaking and is not very tasteful unless prepared in special ways. Although Lola has had difficulty in convincing pregnant women that they should eat fish, the traditional tabus are now giving way due to the influence of the nurse. She also urges the women to see that their children drink the milk, telling them to prepare it with chocolate or in atole if the children do not like it.

In 1971 an additional club was formed specifically for pregnant women; in 1972 there were but eight women active. Women stay with this group until they are urged to wean their children at six months; then they either join or rejoin the Mother's Club.

Lola's response to questioning as to whether the club will remain a going concern is interesting and also indicates that, although little-schooled, Lola is implicitly quite aware of many principles of applied anthropology:

I believe the club is in a crucial stage since some women are now ready to leave the club because their children are almost five. If these women tell others, the club will continue to flourish. As long as I work here and urge women, particularly my comadres, to go, the club will continue. A lot depends on the doctors, especially if they are young and handsome. The current doctor has not given a single meeting and I have had to do it all; women still come, but not with as much enthusiasm. Women like to talk to the young doctors and, as one woman said, "solamente con ver al doctor me alivió" [I got well just seeing the doctor].

In 1970, another doctor attempted to establish a similar club for fathers and failed utterly. Obviously child care is viewed as the domain of women and thus there is little interest, on the part of fathers, in such a venture. It is further hypothesized that while men have many gathering places within the community--saloons, for example--many women probably attend the Mother's Club for the chance to talk with one another. That the health center is now viewed as a gathering place for women is also evidenced by the fact that when women come to the clinic, either to consult with the doctor personally or to bring their children, they rarely leave when their visit is up; rather they sit and chat with others, talking about problems with their children, their pregnancies, and their health.

Although there has been little opposition to the Mother's Club and the lectures in health care, many women, particularly older ones, disagree violently with "modern" beliefs about the rapidity with which a woman should recover following childbirth; most still feel that the forty-day recuperation period is a real necessity. D. Augustina, for example, a woman who was never reticent to call many items within the Cajititlences' belief "superstition," still believes that the doctors and nurse are incorrect when they urge women to be up and about soon after giving birth:

In times past, women were more careful about their health. For forty days we did not leave our houses and always remained covered with blankets and shawls. Nowadays, doctors and nurses tell people that these are superstitions. At eight days women walk around in sleeveless blouses and wear high heels. All women should know that having the arms uncovered causes the milk to dry up. These days there is more cancer and a lot of tumors; sometimes they have to cut a woman open to get the babies. These things never used to happen in the past and I believe that this is due to faulty care after giving birth.

Other changes are similarly disdained. The practice of using wet nurses when a woman does not have sufficient milk is giving way to the use of the bottle. Most women feel that this is an unsatisfactory substitute since the child is not being nurtured by blood; bottle feeding is believed to cause malnutrition and sickliness. The influence of Guadalajara in changing beliefs is also being felt. When one informant was asked to explain conception, she said that she had always thought that a child was the result of the mingling of his parents' blood; she stated further, however, that her daughter who was attending secondary school in Guadalajara had brought home a pamphlet explaining a number of things. It said, for example, that a woman should bathe frequently during menstruation, in opposition to folk beliefs in Cajititlán. More interesting, to the informant's way of thinking, was the explanation for conception. She said that the pamphlet explained that a woman has an egg which is fertilized by the pollen of the man. This particular informant did not know what to believe about the matter but did opine that perhaps this was simply an easy way of presenting the matter to young girls of her daughter's age.

Thus it is that traditional beliefs surrounding pregnancy and childbirth are changing, while many continue unabated. While the public health nurse recognizes that ritual disposal of the placenta is not important, she does nothing to change these practices because they cannot hurt the woman or the child. In other cases, the form of the belief continues, although no one knows why. Thus, no one is aware what properties iron and red objects have in preventing spontaneous abortions, although they are still employed. It will

be recalled that some do not know why the baby's umbilical cord is disposed of in a particular manner, but do this because they are told by older women.

### Baptism

The first pregnancy and subsequent childbirth is important to a woman because she is allowed to learn, for the first time, of the many beliefs and customs surrounding this event. The baptism of the first child is also important in the process of achieving adulthood, for a woman, in conjunction with her husband, has the opportunity to choose her first set of major compadres. While she and an unmarried brother or she and her husband might have served as baptismal godparents, the couple will never have had the experience of selecting these important individuals.

Unlike the area of sex knowledge where a woman finds out just what she needs to know only when she needs to know it, children are allowed practice in the selection of fictive kinship ties. It was pointed out in the chapter on childhood that children generally start selecting their own godparents at the first communion. There is also one method in which adolescents are allowed to select not godparents, but compadres. Many families set up nativity scenes during the Christmas season. On February second, these are dismantled and adolescents within the house are allowed to select compadres to do this task; they are thus godparents of the Christ child in the nativity scene.

Thus when the first child is born the couple is not completely untutored in the selection of godparents for the child.

News of the birth of a child passes into the community by word of mouth, but his formal presentation comes with baptism. The child is baptized from one week to six months after the birth, in general. In the past when the cuarentena (forty-day period) was rigidly observed, the child was never baptized until after this time, since in informants' memories the mother was always present at these events.

In the case of baptism, godparents have responsibilities to the child, while the couple has a ritual obligation to the godparents. The godmother must buy a baptismal outfit and several other dresses and diapers; the godfather is responsible for filling his pockets with change to distribute to youngsters after the service. The couple is charged with giving a party to honor the new godparents.

Baptisms occur every Sunday at 4:30 p.m., immediately before the last mass of the day. The godparents go to the parents' home, where the godmother dresses the child in the baptismal dress. Then the mother picks up the child, handing her to the godmother, and all go to the church. There the priest meets them at the door where he asks what name has been selected for the child; most often the child has been referred to as "baby" before the baptism and this ritual is a naming ceremony in a very real sense. Although it is said that it is the godparents' responsibility to select the name of the child, this is carried out very infrequently in actual practice.

The child is handed back to the mother and the ceremony starts. During the ceremony the priest asks that the child be given to the godmother who holds it for the rest of the time. Meanwhile small children of the community gather outside the church and start to



yell "bolo, bolo" as the couples and their compadres leave the church. Bolo refers to the money which the godfathers now throw out to the waiting children.

Sometimes others are present at the ceremony, such as the young woman's mother, but more often all others wait at the house. A party follows to which the godparents are allowed to invite whom they want; generally they invite only close relatives. The couple also invite their relatives.

All guests invited by the godparents and male relatives of the couple sit together for a meal; they are served by the female relatives of the couple, including the new mother. Following the meal the two couples go into a room for the compadre's embrace; this event is virtually never witnessed by others, thus reinforcing the idea that dyadic contracts are being formed. The embrace calls for a ritual speech, asking for pardon for any offences committed toward the other. The father of the child makes this speech to the godfather who then does the same; the mother of the child follows suit with the godmother, who then makes the same speech; finally the godmother and father of the child and the godfather and mother of the child simultaneously repeat the process. After this, a toast is made and the two couples are, at least ideally, forever bound as compadres.

It can be seen, then, that although the baptismal ceremony is ostensibly for the child, important links are established between the sets of compadres. The selection of these compadres is but one more step in the achievement of full social adulthood.

Summary

After giving birth to a first child, a young woman of Cajititlán finds that all feminine cultural knowledge is opened to her. Although she may not yet be sought out for advice, she is allowed to participate in conversations which were previously closed to her and may ask questions and talk of her own experiences. Thus she comes to be treated more as an equal than she ever was in any other phase of her life.

At baptisms the couple assumes, for the first time, the responsibility of selecting major compadres. Thus they have made an additional step in becoming recognized adult members of the community.

More importantly, after the first child, the couple generally begins its own household, either by establishing an additional kitchen within the family compound or by moving to another house. This is important since as long as a family lives together and shares the same kitchen, most money is turned over to the oldest adult female of the household. Thus in having a child, a woman also often achieves economic adulthood and becomes the holder of the family purse. If it is the case that the couple does not change its living pattern, economic adulthood is held in abeyance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ADULTHOOD, SENESCENCE, AND DEATH

#### Vignette Three

Doña Lidia Morales lives in a house with a formal tiled breezeway, three rooms, and two kitchens; although this appears to be but one house, the Cajititlences regard it as two houses. Thus, doña Lidia's house consists of two rooms, one kitchen, half of the breezeway, half of the patio, and half of the corral, and her family is made up of her husband, d. Miguel Cortés, and her only unmarried child, Rafael, who is nineteen. The rest of the house is occupied by her oldest son, Benito, who is twenty-five, and his wife, Ruth. They have two children, Miguelito and Domínga, who are three and one, respectively. D. Lidia also has two married daughters, Elisa and Francisca, who live with their husbands in other households.

D. Lidia awakes today at dawn, as she has for many years. She recalls that when she was a girl, and there was no mill to which to take the corn to be ground, a woman's work often began at 4:00 a.m. She thinks on this as she dresses, believing that women now live in la gloria (heaven) since conveniences now make their lives much easier. She goes to her two-burner gas stove to boil milk, still marveling at all the changes she has seen in her fifty years; everyone else is still asleep and she uses these early morning hours to think about such things. She wishes that they had a television set like many of her neighbors

but hopes that they may manage to buy one this year, after she sells her pigs. She now hears that Benito and Ruth have gotten up and goes to awaken d. Miguel and Rafael. Benito and Miguel will go to the fields early today; it is February and they must care for the plants sown in June and July, but since nothing is ready for harvesting, the corn having already been harvested, they will return before the midday meal. They will breakfast on beans and bread before they leave. Rafael will leave on the seven o'clock bus to travel to Guadalajara where he is working as a day laborer, painting.

D. Lidia dreads the time when they all will leave since she must remain behind with Ruth. She was displeased with her son's desire to marry the girl but her pleadings, along with those of d. Miguel, did nothing to dissuade him; in the end they capitulated and asked for the girl's hand. The household has been unhappy since that time, for she and Ruth simply cannot get along. When their first child was born, a new kitchen was established in the hope that this would alleviate the difficulties. To d. Lidia's way of thinking, this has not happened, for Ruth is lazy; doesn't d. Lidia still give Benito his breakfast in the mornings before he goes to the fields? She hears Ruth cajoling her son to find another house and this makes her blood boil. All the violent arguments between them has made d. Lidia fall ill with colic and she suffers severe stomach pains. She does not want her son to leave the only house he has known, especially since this will deprive her of the continuous contact with her grandchildren. Lately she and Ruth have avoided each other as much as possible and d. Lidia resolves that she will wash clothes at the

lake today, after she has run her errands. Perhaps Rafael will marry a girl who will take her duties more seriously and even run the errands for her, a task Ruth did not perform even before having children, spending her time running around in her citified clothes.

While the men eat, she gets the nixtamal ready to take to the mill and plans what she will buy; today she will make a meal of rice, squash, and beans and there will be no meat. As the men leave and she readies herself to run the errands, one of her daughters, Elisa, appears at the door, offering to run her mother's errands while she does her own. D. Lidia speculates that Elisa is a good daughter, always remembering her mother and bringing her a portion of the money she makes by giving injections. It does not occur to d. Lidia that she is often resentful of the time Ruth spends with her own parents.

While she awaits Elisa's return, d. Lidia busies herself sweeping, mopping, and making beds, marveling at how quickly she can finish these jobs when someone is running her errands for her. Ruth is now in her own kitchen and they barely nod to each other as they pass. Elisa returns and the two sit down to share an early morning cup of coffee; Elisa is approximately three months pregnant with her first child, having been married the year before. D. Lidia takes this opportunity to see that Elisa is taking care of herself, giving her advice about what she should and should not do. She tells of her plans to do washing today and d. Lidia says that she plans to do likewise; the two agree to meet at the lakeshore, where they will have a chance to chat further.

D. Lidia cleans the kitchen and then prepares to go to the lake, putting all the clothes in a large metal tub, which she will carry atop her head. When she arrives at the lakeshore, she is pleasantly surprised to find Elisa already there with her older sister, Fransisca, and her one-year-old daughter. D. Lidia drags a large flat rock close to them and the three busily engage themselves in the task at hand. Three other women come up and they all start to talk and wash. First conversation centers around the latest juicy bit of gossip; Ermelinda Castillo, a sixty-five-year-old widow, who is avecindada (not a native-born Cajititlence) in Cajititlán, has a novio, a man of fifty-five who fled to the village after killing a man in his own village. D. Lupe, one of the women at the lakeshore, lives across the street from Ermelinda and claims she saw Saco Negro (Black Jacket, as the man is nicknamed) stealing away from Ermelinda's house at 5:30 a.m. This sets the women laughing and talking about what charms the old widow must have, none of which are apparent to the eye. The character assassination of Ermelinda continues as one woman opines that she does not even know how to wash clothes correctly. D. Lidia reflects that she is pleased that she has taught her daughters how to wash so there will be no criticism of them or of her, if the women happen to join together with none of them present. Her daughters know that each piece should be soaped three times with the big bar of yellow soap, and that only vigorous scrubbing will get the clothes clean; they also realize that one must take care that all soap is removed by filling the sardine can full of water and alternately wetting the clothes and scrubbing, removing the soap. When her own

clothes are washed, d. Lidia spreads them on bushes nearby so they will start to dry, as conversation continues unabated. They have been washing for three hours and d. Lidia now finishes. She must collect the clothes and hurry home to start the midday meal, thinking to herself what a lonely job this will be.

When she returns to the house, d. Lidia puts the beans and squash on to cook and then builds a fire to make the tortillas. As she busies herself at these tasks she begins to think of her life and of things long since past. She recalls that when she first married she had some problems with d. Miguel for he had a tendency to drink too much. She would pray to all the saints for his safety since, when drunk, he was apt to become aggressive and she feared for his life. She was fond of saying, in those days, only half-jokingly, that each time Miguel left the house for a saloon she made sure that the house was spotless. Then, if he were murdered, all would be in readiness for the wake. She was well aware of the dangers since two of her own brothers were murdered, one in her own home. These deaths affected her to such an extent that she was ill for two years. So she worried, in years gone by, but now she feels the danger was almost over since Miguel has now learned to control his vicios (vices) and is now a well-respected community member.

D. Lidia is shaken from her reminiscences as Benito and d. Miguel return home from the fields, dirty and tired. Ruth comes out of her kitchen to greet the men as Benito and d. Miguel sit down to play cards in the breezeway. D. Lidia returns to the hearth and the making of her tortillas; dinner will be ready soon.

She calls d. Miguel to eat, she serves him, and then sits down to eat her meal. In the past when her full complement of children were still living in the house, the men usually ate first. No longer, for with Rafael working in Guadalajara, she and d. Miguel are the only ones to partake of her daily meals. They chat aimlessly about the crops, pigs, and the weather; although d. Lidia has never worked in the fields she knows enough to make conversation and is well aware of her responsibilities to her husband's crops. She has exercised some of these responsibilities during the twenty-six years of her marriage. If rains fell too heavily she broke off bits of the palm she took to be blessed on Palm Sunday and made small crosses out of the pieces; these she gave to d. Miguel to take to his fields to protect the crops from damage. In times of drought she joined with other women, men, and children in processions through the fields to bless them and pray for rain. So she has no difficulty talking with d. Miguel about his agricultural pursuits.

After eating the meal, they remain seated together and Benito soon joined them, Ruth busying herself with the children, cleaning her kitchen, and preparing to visit her mother. The three sit together and d. Miguel, a spinner of yarns, begins to tell tales; all laugh heartily at the end of the stories, including d. Miguel, even though they have all been heard before and been laughed at many times in the past. He tells one story obviously brought on by the previous conversation which has always fascinated d. Lidia because she has never been able to find out if it is a true story or not, although it is always related as such. D. Miguel relates it as follows:



A long time ago in Cajititlán it did not rain when the time for the rains came. The people grew more and more worried and finally the men of the town went to the priest and asked him if they could borrow the Christ figure to carry into the fields. They formed a processional and visited every field in the village. That night the rains came--in torments. The next day the fields were flooded. The women of the town banded together and went to see the priest. They asked him if they could take out a processional with the Virgin Mary at its head. The priest ranted at them, "What do you mean? Can't you see that the crops are ruined by so much rain last night?" To this, one old woman replied, "Yes, Father, but we want the Virgin to see the chingaduras [failures] that her son made."

As usual, this story brings gales of laughter, and the invariable repetition of the ending by d. Miguel, as he acts the part of the old woman. Then d. Miguel suggests that he and Benito resume their card game. D. Lidia cleans the kitchen and goes to feed her pigs. She has been concerned because one of her two sows delivered a litter about two months ago and the piglets are still nursing. This, she knows, is bad for the sow because her blood goes to make the milk and if the piglets continue to sap the sow's strength she will grow thin and sicken. Two days ago she started feeding the sow squash and notes with relief that today the squash has had the expected result and the sow's milk has dried up.

Now in the late afternoon still she hears the sound of a small bell and realizes that the Virgin of Refuge is being brought to her house. She runs to set up a table; Ruth comes out too and assists since she is also a member of the religious conference honoring this Virgin. Three women and a number of children file in, carrying the picture of the Virgin in a glass case, the children bearing flowers. The Virgin is placed on the table with the flowers around her; all kneel and sing praises to her. The women present are the president

of the conference, the encargada (woman in charge of moving the image from house to house), and the woman in whose house the Virgin had last rested. Since both d. Lidia and Ruth are members, the image will remain in their breezeway for two full days. Then two days from now, the president, and the encargada, both widows, will return, at about the same time of day. They will sing more praises to the Virgin; then d. Lidia and Ruth will provide fresh flowers and accompany the women to the next house on the list.

As twilight falls, Virginia Valle appears at the doorway, complaining to d. Lidia that she has an ache in her back. D. Lidia has the reputation in town of being a very efficient masseuse and is able to remove such pains by massaging the nerves of the patient's entire body. She takes Virginia in her bedroom where she lies down and is treated; for this service d. Lidia charges three pesos, money to be added to the family's case reserve. Virginia leaves, after resting for a while, with a blanket covering her, so that she will not be attacked by "air." While she lies on the bed she tells d. Lidia about the most recent indiscretion of the mayor who is charging very high fines which he is allowed to pocket. Virginia, a spinster, is a local storekeeper and always knows the latest gossip.

Evening is now upon them and all sit in the breezeway, except for d. Lidia who sits at her sewing machine in the bedroom, mending torn pants. Later she joins the others, and, taking Miguelito in her lap, sings lullabies to him. After he falls asleep she joins the others in the strained conversation always characteristic when Ruth is present. Rafael arrives home from work and d. Lidia sets out bread

and milk for her husband and unmarried son. They chat in the kitchen and soon retire.

\* \* \*

D. Lidia's life, like those of Rosi and Cuca, also centers about the home. Her domestic activities occur both within and without the house and include chores, mending, and the preparation of meals. Her immediate domestic group has now dispersed and two daughters live in other households. She still interacts with them, as we have seen, but they either visit or meet together at the lakeshore. The addition of a daughter-in-law, with whom d. Lidia interacts little, causes a dilemma, for d. Lidia attempts to maximize interaction with her son, Benito, while minimizing interactions with Ruth.

In this vignette, we have seen an example of domestic religious activity. D. Lidia's activities include those of preparing a place for the image, participating in the singing, and, two days later, supplying cut flowers. She interacts with the women of the religious conference and, in this case, cooperates with Ruth, also a conference member. Even in such domestic religious endeavor, d. Lidia will be called upon to leave the household in order to move the image to the next house.

We have seen that Cuca served as an economic intermediary, while Rosi was able to earn money by sewing. D. Lidia also has a part-time specialty, curing, but, in addition, raises pigs, a practice of female household heads. Both her part-time economic specialty and extra-household domestic duties serve as a means of interaction with other community members and she is thus able to keep abreast of local gossip.

D. Lidia, then, maintains interaction with her now dispersed family and moves into the community for a variety of reasons. Other characters, within this vignette, point up alternative life styles and situations, such as widows who are in charge of a religious conference and the spinster who manages a store.

### Discussion Three

In this chapter we shall examine vignette activities, in order to portray life as it exists for adult women of Cajititlán. First attention will be given to the quality of husband-wife relationships. Then a discussion will ensue of motherhood and its implications even when one's children have reached adulthood. The third section will be devoted to other roles taken by women who are husbandless: spinsters, prostitutes, etc.; this section is termed "short-circuited life cycles." In the following sections the religious, economic, and political roles of these categories of women will be analyzed. Finally we shall turn our attention to senescence and death, particularly as these events affect the lives of women one generation removed.

### The Quality of Husband-Wife Relationships

As noted previously, female ambivalence toward marriage is practically universal in Cajititlán. Stories abound which demonstrate that marriage is a sorry state in which to find one-self, sometimes even for men. Examples are myriad, indicting drunken, jealous, or violent husbands and treacherous wives, but several specific examples will suffice here:

1. Luz Covarrubias had a husband who was so unpreoccupied with making a living that often she had nothing in the house to eat. When this happened, she would put on a pot of boiling water, so that people would believe she was cooking and would not suspect that she was actually suffering from hunger. Her parents had opposed the match and Luz did not wish them to know that they had been right. Her relatives soon discovered the sham and would take beans to her, giving them in such a way so as not to offend; for example, her sister would say that she had too many beans or create some other fiction.
2. Josefina Navarro left town with her children when her husband began to live with a widow whose husband had been murdered; she went to live in San Juan, a village across the lake, with one of her sisters. A few years ago, she died from sorrow when her only son drowned. Recently her husband was murdered and the Cajititlences suspect that Josefina's nephew killed him.
3. Socorro Portillo is said to live a very sad life. Her husband is a drunkard who must satisfy his vices even when there is no money. Thus he periodically goes to live with an elderly woman who runs a saloon; she, it is rumored, gives him money and liquor in exchange for sexual favors. This causes Socorro great embarrassment.
4. Chon Romero supports two "wives" and two households; he has had three children by his legal wife and two by his mujer (woman). He alternately lives with each family, an arrangement of some twenty<sup>es</sup> years' duration. Some years ago he took a trip to the frontier, taking both women with him. His legal wife is said to be a very timid woman who suffers greatly from this infringement upon her marital rights; she now refuses to leave the house.

5. Twenty years ago, Bonifacio Rios' wife left town in the middle of the night with another man, leaving behind three small daughters. She has returned only once, trying to steal her children away; she failed. It is speculated that she is now a prostitute in Tijuana. Women in town seem to feel pity for Bonifacio who has never been able to marry since a church divorce is not possible and has refused to merely cohabit with a woman out of respect for his mother. Men joke behind his back because he is somehow less of a man. Although now sixty years old, no one calls him "don."

6. Antonio Gutierrez has a wife and six daughters; his only son was murdered. He works very hard in the fields all day, with only a cold lunch to sustain him, and returns, after dark, with loads of firewood to increase the family's income. As he passes down the street on his burro, women gather in doorways and pity him, saying that his wife and daughters are very lazy and he must earn all the money; they share the household work together and have much free time.

To accept these stories as indicative that all husbands and wives have great difficulties is to accept their preponderance merely at face value. These tales told are true, yet no one is particularly interested in gossip relating that d. Cleto, who is eighty-two, was seen walking down the street with his wife, holding her hand. Nor is little attention paid when Román brings home a pair of shoes to surprise his wife, after making a trip to Guadalajara. Careful observation indicates that many couples in Cajititlán seem to live happily and harmoniously with one another. It is too facile to fall into the trap

of advocating that husbands and wives do not get along, merely because local gossip centers around the least fortunate couples. Gossip serves to describe aberrant behavior and is a means of social control.

It has incessantly been argued that women are viewed as inferior to men in Latin American countries, and, therefore, husbands dominate their wives. It is true that men often refer to women as débil (weak) and a woman, as a weak creature, it is said, should be protected and will always bend to a man's wishes. If a couple's daughter is "robbed" the husband always avows that his wife is herida or wounded; he, as a man, must be brave and accept these horrible actions, without tears. Folk tales related by men almost invariably show the cunningness of men in their abilities to thwart the treachery of women. One example should suffice with the explanation that it is believed that the ani (ticús), a large black bird, has magical properties and women can feed this bird to their husbands, thus making them stupid and unable to function as machos. The story is as follows:

One day a woman came into a house, only to find her comadre crying. Upon inquiring about the reason for this outburst she was told that the crying woman had been slapped by her husband; thus she came to suggest that the woman serve him ticús. Unbeknownst to the pair, the wounded woman's small son was listening to the entire plan.

The woman went right to work, making the dish which featured the ticús, disguised as chicken. She decided to go wash clothes and instructed her small son to tell his father to eat when he came in.

When the man returned, the son, who did not know of the effects of ticús, said, "Mama has gone to wash. Come and eat your ticús; it will be very delicious."

The man threw the ticús away but fixed the plates so that the woman would think he had eaten. Then he went to the saloon and started to drink. When he came back he drunkenly said, "Here I come home, full of ticús," and started to beat his wife with the flat edge of his machete.

Later the wife went to visit her comadre, wailing, "not only did the ticús not work--it made him even angrier."

In stories such as these, the continual domination of men over women is illustrated.

Women also often affirm that they are the "weaker sex," particularly in front of menfolk. Cultural facts are often explained in these terms; it is for this reason, for example, that male foetuses are said to develop more quickly than female foetuses. On the other hand, women are not so quick to assign this position to themselves when only in the presence of other women. They say that men act like children when they are ill while women continue working. They (along with men) affirm that it is more preferable that the man die first in any marriage since a widowed man is very pitiable while a widowed woman can carry on a full life; unlike men, however, many go ahead to affirm, "son hombres y son cobardes" ("they are men and they are cowards"). As was shown previously, it is also the case that men are said to "need" marriage more than women; one informant argued that, again, this was because men are very child-like and need someone to care for them.

When questioning an adolescent girl about the good qualities of women as opposed to men and men as opposed to women, she responded that women love their children more than men. Men, on the other hand, have more respect for their novias than the novias have for them. She said that, in courtship, the man always has to be perfect while the woman can be deceitful and coqueta (coquettish). This may indicate that young girls have already learned that they have certain powers over males.



These beliefs also extend to the type of folk tales related by women; women do not generally tell folk tales in the presence of men and always allow a man to enjoy center stage. Among women, however, their tales tend to illustrate the cunningness of women vis-a-vis men; an example follows:

No one in town could get along with the local priest, for he was very moody. Finally, after having much difficulty with his housekeeper, he told her, "if I am wearing my hat, that means I don't wish to talk." She agreed to his proposition but, stating that she was also a moody individual, said that if she turned her apron around, that meant she didn't wish to talk. Wisely, she turned her apron around the first time the priest wore his hat. She would fix meals for him, but not call him to the table, simply placing the dishes there; he, because he was wearing his hat, would not ask her for meals. After three days, the priest was starving. Finally he told his housekeeper, "I'm taking my hat off for good now, if you'll only turn your apron around."

After this the priest was always in good humor and the people of the town said the woman had performed a miracle.

These avowals of women which indicate that they do not consider themselves inferior to men, nor totally passive in their relationships to men, carry over into other areas of husband-wife interaction. Women are the de facto heads of the households, as has been noted by the Reichel-Dolmatoffs (1961:157). Sometimes the bride must live for a time under the domination of her mother-in-law, but it is still the case that a woman is the mistress in the home. It is commonly assumed by Latin American men that, in the United States, the women rule while in Latin America the man is always jefe (chief) of the household. Women, too, often pay lip-service to this ideal but tell unceasingly of their abilities to cajole their husbands into doing what they want. Within the home, women command and men should not have to concern themselves

with matters of the household. It is by no means uncommon, however, for men to help their wives in domestic chores; when they were observed in such tasks by this researcher, she was invariably asked not to reveal this fact to other men. Since men are often absent from their homes while tending to their fields, women are in almost complete charge of their children. When questioning women about the way in which a woman can rule while still maintaining the fiction that the man is the head of the house, informants responded that the woman must be clever. For example, one wanted to establish a tendejón (neighborhood grocery); her husband demurred, insisting that they had no money. She persisted, saying that they should go ahead even if they could sell but tomatoes and onions; she thought commerce would be an exciting venture and would not desist in her plea. Finally her husband agreed, for, as she put it, "siempre cae y siempre hace lo que digo" ("he always gives in and always does what I say").

In order to understand the institutionalization of the foregoing social fiction, one must realize that there is a distinction between public and private life. The terms "public" and "private" have a spatial dimension in that the latter term refers to the confines of the house while the former refers to all other areas. There is an added dimension, however, for the private household becomes "public" when others, particularly men, enter. In public, as here defined, a woman shows deference to the man and behaves as if he is the household head; she publicly expresses the idea that the man is the ruler in the house while adopting behavior in private which in a shrewd way satisfies both partners. Moreover it is here

contended that men do not want to concern themselves with matters of the family and are perfectly willing to allow women this authority. It is further suggested that perhaps the husband and wife are both quite aware of the roles which they are playing. Goffman (1959:78) has pointed out that sometimes roles are played as "teams" or a "set of individuals who cooperate in staging a single routine." His example of such "team-work" seems strikingly similar to the situation in Cajititlán, although he is addressing himself to United States' culture:

When husband and wife appear before new friends for an evening of sociability, the wife may demonstrate more respectful subordination to the will and opinion of her husband than she may bother to show when alone with him or when with old friends. When she assumes a respectful role, he can assume a dominant one; and when each member of the marriage team plays its special role, the conjugal unit, as a unit, can sustain the impression that new audiences expect of it.

Another oft-reported ideal, relating to passivity in rural Latin American women, is that women should also be very passive sexual partners, never initiate sexual encounters, and that they, themselves, regard the sex act with mere tolerance or disgust. This, from the women's point of view, seems to be pure myth; indeed women expressed interest in learning about United States' sexual practices since it is ironically rumored that North American women are lifeless in bed. Informants say that this is not the case with Mexican women for, as one female informant put it, "una mujer que no se mueve es como un palo y no sirve para nada" ("a woman who doesn't move is like a stick and is worthless"). Sex, between husband and wife, is considered both natural and necessary and one Cajititlence even argued that women suffer so in childbirth they should be able to enjoy the sexual

creation of the child. It is recognized that some women do experience pain during intercourse but this is attributed to a very small sexual passage; after giving birth to one child, the problem is said to be naturally solved.

The view of sex as normal is further attested to by the belief in a particularly dreaded folk ailment which is related to sexual continence in women; if a woman does not enjoy regular sexual encounters, she is apt to develop maggots in her vagina, which excite her to further desire for sexual activity, and will eventually cause her death by eating her sexual organs. There is some culturally expressed ambivalence toward sex, however, since virginity at marriage is highly praised. Apparently, the reasoning is, however, that once having enjoyed sex, it is difficult to discontinue. This belief can be seen in the difference in having an illegitimate child before marriage, and having one as a widow. The girl who becomes pregnant before marriage will be heavily criticized and will have difficulty finding a husband. If a widow becomes pregnant, much more tolerance is to be expected for, as the Cajititlences aver, she knows about such matters and her life is made very difficult without sex. It is further postulated that an additional force may be in operation; since virginity can be surrendered only once, any man who wished to marry a widow would know, beforehand, that she is not a virgin. In addition, the fact that an unmarried woman or man who has had no known sexual contact is buried as an angelito (little angel) without a mass, and is thought to go directly to heaven, regardless of age, indicates that the sex act is tantamount to a loss of innocence.

In summary, we have examined four postulates of traditional ethnography in this section. First, although Lewis (1949) argues that husbands and wives are often at odds with each other, it is here suggested that many couples do enjoy rather satisfying marriage partnerships and that the myriad of examples of poor partnerships can be attributed to their relative values as gossip. The superiority of men, also continually reported, may be paid lip-service by women but is often disputed when women interact together in the absence of men; the fact that women do feel compelled to affirm this ideal, on occasion, and such matters as the physiological development of the foetus in respect to male and female children, indicate that the superiority of men is, indeed, a cultural ideal. In this case, it is evident that the ideal differs from the real, at least among women. The same can be said for the ideal of rulership which postulates that men are the household heads; it has been shown that women are de facto household heads, and women believe they can manipulate men. Thus while the passivity ideal is played by a woman in public, in private she may be quite domineering. Finally the "ideal" of the sexually passive woman is in doubt. Since it was difficult to question males about this area, it may be that men publicly avow this as an ideal; yet men, according to women, actually prefer a sexually active woman. If this is the case, then it provides another example of the ideal diverging from the real.

There are, indeed, other aspects of the husband-wife roles, particularly in terms of division of labor in matters economic, political, and religious. These will be treated in later sections so that comparisons may be drawn between the participation in these

spheres by a wide variety of women, including spinsters and widows, in an attempt to draw up a table of organization for men and women.

### Motherhood

It is, at times, difficult to separate the role of mother from that of wife and to assign responsibilities which are solely of one role or another. The role of mother has already been analyzed in a number of sections: how she is charged with the duties of early socialization, her continuing influence in the lives of her adolescent daughters, her role in teaching the young wife about pregnancy and childbirth, and how she gives advice about infant care. We have not, however, devoted much attention to the mother-son tie which has been seen as fundamental by many, including Schwartz (1962) and Díaz-Guerrero (1955). Nor have we considered, fully, the influence women continue to exert in the lives of their daughters and sons in later life.

As has been noted, males spend many of their childhood years in constant contact with women. The reverence that the child develops for his mother is very pervasive, the most stinging insult being the "mentada de la madre" ("naming of the mother"). No man should ever allow anyone to speak evil of his mother. While children are taught that respecto or respect for one's parents is paramount, they soon learn that more affection can be directed to and received from the mother; this is particularly the case with male children, for girls tend to have more affectionate relationships with their fathers than boys. Consequently, it was explained that a woman should go to get her son if he is drunk in a local saloon, for it is believed that,

when drunk, sons might be disrespectful to their fathers; because of the strong mother-son tie, it is assumed that a boy would never lack respect for his mother. Even after marriage, if a couple live with his parents, the mother continues to perform this function for it is again assumed that the husband might be publicly disrespectful to his wife.

Various anthropologists have noted that the mother-son tie is sometimes the cause of problems between a husband and wife, the man often being torn between his mother and his wife. Stories abound within the community of such problems; thus d. Lidia's difficulty with Ruth is extremely common. When a couple lives with his parents, the problem is often exacerbated. While the men are gone from the house most of the day, the women are in continual interaction. When problems arise, both the mother and the wife accost the young man with accounts of the difficulty, which often differ sharply; many times the husband chooses to believe the mother. This tends to start a cycle, for the young wife, who is not reinforced deferentially by her husband, draws her children close to her; Lola Schwartz (1962:76) argues that, for this reason, the mother often teaches her sons that all women are evil and will abandon them, except, of course, their own mother. As a result of this closeness, when a woman's sons reach adulthood, she is loath to allow these sources of affection to be taken from her easily; therefore she attempts to keep her sons from courting girls and is often jealous of their sweethearts. When a son eventually marries, he continues to feel affection for, and to consult with, his mother, as has been his pattern, often to the exclusion of his wife... and the cycle repeats itself.

This oft-repeated scheme is an oversimplification but certainly present in Cajititlán. However, it also happens that the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law can and do get along well together. If a mother approves of her son's choice of a mate, she will often urge him to marry the girl, mainly, it is hypothesized, because she knows that she can get on well with the girl and the girl will follow her wishes. She bases this assumption on the reputation and respect accorded the girl within the community. For women do want their sons to marry for a number of reasons. First a woman wants grandchildren because babies are cherished and she is often beyond her childbearing years; it will be recalled that d. Lidia feared Benito and Ruth would move to another house, thus depriving her of her contact with her grandchildren. The woman knows also that if the couple live with her, she will have one more pair of hands around to help her with her work. This is extremely important since, with more women around, there is less work for everyone. It is possible, for example, to compare the relationship of d. Lidia and Ruth, who did not cooperate, with the case of Rosi's mother and her relationship with her daughter-in-law. It has been mentioned that the girl, when she marries, is said to belong to a "new family"; in ideal terms she now owes more loyalty to her mother-in-law than to her own mother. The ideal daughter-in-law, then, should help her husband's mother around the house. The idea is supported by many that there is less friction when a couple has its own kitchen, and, therefore, is a separate economic unit. Even when this is the case, the daughter-in-law should continue to aid her mother-in-law, running errands for her and helping her with household chores.



With more females around, there is less work for each, and, as a consequence, women are reluctant for their daughters to marry. The daughter, then, becomes part of a "new family" and her help is lost; the good daughter, however, continues to help her mother the way Elisa did with d. Lidia. It is sometimes argued that a young woman should give a part of any income she has to her parents. Even if she continues to help her mother and to aid the family financially, mothers still feel they have lost their daughters when they marry. Children, at home, are considered old-age insurance and a commonly heard saying is, "los hijos son el báculo de la vejez" ("children are the staffs or supports of old age").

Thus a woman attempts to maximize the affection she receives from her children. One woman who is considered quite fortunate by other women in Cajititlán has two spinster daughters and two sons. The sons both married "good" wives and they live, each family with its own kitchen, in the same compound. It is said that the woman, therefore, does not have to work much and constantly has daughters-in-law to help her.

Women often speak, then, of suffering for their children. This suffering is generally well rewarded for they usually receive the lifelong respect and affection of their children. It will be shown in the section on old age that a mother with children who support her in her last days is considered very fortunate.

### Short-Circuited Life Cycles

Approximately one in every eleven women in Cajititlán never marries, never lives with a man, and never bears children.<sup>1</sup> These

señoritas, who are generally highly respected members of the community, are denied the right to be called "doña" (as are unmarried men), which indicates that a certain amount of respect is due a married woman. They are often referred to as "muchachas ya grandes" ("old girls"), another indication that they are not considered fully adult members of the community. Since they are presumed virgins, they sometimes promise to play the Virgin of Guadalupe role, usually reserved for adolescents. They also belong to the "Acción Católica" for unmarried women and attend exercises given by the priest during Lent, with adolescent girls, not married women; during this time, they learn how they should conduct themselves with boyfriends, even if they are sixty- or seventy-years-old.

While there are many indications that spinsters are somehow not accorded full social adulthood, including the fact that they are buried as angelitos, there is a special respect term for addressing the elderly from among their ranks; one says, "Usted (Thee), Juana" or "Usted, Aurora." This is not to be confused with the normal formal tense, for this form is used preeminently in this context.

Although denied the honorific "doña," these women are well respected and often searched out to serve as godmothers; as a matter of course they are denied the right to be baptismal godparents, unless they happen to have a brother, unmarried or widowed, who can serve with them. It is believed that these women, having no children of their own, will take the duties of godmother more seriously, as well as the duties of comadre. Furthermore, spinsters, such as Virginia Valle, are often storekeepers and thus have access to a great amount of gossip;

they are thus sought out for this purpose. The town's most prominent spinsters are the public nurse and two schoolteachers who are accorded a great deal of respect. (Economic and religious participation of spinsters will be discussed more fully in following sections.)

Although less than 10 per cent of the population live in consensual union, mention should be made of illegitimacy and common-law marriage. As has been remarked, virginity is prized in Cajititlán; a girl who submits to her novio's advances should hope that pregnancy ensues for the boy who takes a girl's virginity is morally obligated to marry her, if she becomes pregnant. If not, her reputation is usually ruined and she can find no marriage partner. These unfortunate women often fall into a pattern of serial consensual unions, having children by a series of men. Such women are not accorded much respect within the community and are very rarely considered for compadrazgo relationships.

Common-law unions of long duration are viewed with much ambivalence. If a man has left one woman for another, the second woman is criticized heavily and not respected. If, however, a truly unfortunate marriage contract was established, such that a man or woman is left by an unworthy spouse, such new unions are tolerated.

Finally, there are two groups of women who are not from Cajititlán and who usually stay in the community for short periods of time--nuns and prostitutes. The nuns have an important socializing influence on children, leading catechism classes and also teaching in the town's parochial school. The prostitutes, who are often responsible for initiating young men into sex, might also be said to perform a socializing function.

### Religious Roles

As has already been shown, women are charged with important rites within the religious community, such as sponsoring masses; women are also charged with specific religious tasks within the household: their greatest formal roles, recognized by both men and women, are responsibilities to the household.

To women falls the task of beginning the religious socialization process with children. Women are also much more likely to make promises to Virgins and saints if a family member becomes ill. They are also charged with specific functions when a family member dies, to be discussed later. Women are also responsible for taking water to be blessed by the priest on the Saturday before Easter; this water is kept in the house and used for emergencies, before and after household deaths and to "remove the devil" if a man becomes crazed by drink, a person is delirious from a fever, or the like. She is also most likely to take palms to be blessed on Palm Sunday, the palms being used in the manner exhibited by d. Lidia.

Women also have specific responsibilities in burning candles on All Saint's day and in establishing household altars. The Virgins and saints which "visit" each house are said to help to protect the household from disaster. The responsibility for serving as President or encargada often falls to spinsters and elderly widows since they have more time to devote to the religious conferences. (It should be noted that some conferences, such as that of Our Lady of Refuge, are reserved for married women, while spinsters can belong to other conferences, such as that of Saint Joseph.) There are currently six

such conferences in Cajititlán. In the past the priest arranged a day for each conference, each week, and all the women would meet together to pray; the current priest has not continued this practice and thus the conferences' functions have become more limited and centered almost exclusively on the household.

The woman in charge of a household also has a specific task to perform in relation to the Christ Child. Each December twenty-third and twenty-fourth, three village women carry an image of the Christ Child from the church to every house in Cajititlán; one woman carries the Christ Child, one brings a box for contributions, and the other rings a small bell. Currently these women are widows although they were married when they began serving; when one becomes too old or dies, another is chosen by the women who serve. The women do not enter the house but meet the female head of the house outside the door, handing the Christ Child to her. She takes the image to each family member who kisses it. Then she places the image on each bed in the house, to remove the evil in each person's heart. Finally, she returns the image, along with an offering. This ritual could be seen as symbolic of the responsibilities that the woman has to her household as the keeper of the faith.

In addition, women are charged with other religious actions which can be said to function for the good of the religious community, including the sponsoring of masses during May and June. Further, to women falls the duty of making clothes for the images of the saints, as well as keeping the saints' paraphernalia clean and in good repair.

Adult women also have traditional roles to play in the organization of the mayordomía-cargo system of Cajititlán. The major

annual fiesta in Cajititlán is that to honor the Three Kings, lasting nine days. In this fiesta the traditional pattern of cargo-taking has been modified somewhat. Male household heads are all divided into lists, two groups for each day. One group is responsible for the masses and decoration of the church and the other is charged with the processional, music, and fireworks outside of the church; money is collected from each member by the group leader, selected by the priest, and there is some competition for magnificence in fireworks, the amount of music, and the quality of the processional. The women of each group are responsible for finding people to serve in the processions, designing costumes, dressing those who will be involved, and deciding upon the order in which the processions will take place. Each day's processional is a bit different but usually an adolescent girl, boy, and baby are selected to play the parts of Mary, Joseph, and the Babe; an angel is selected from the ranks of girls whose first communion dresses still fit; and three boys portray the Three Kings. Some women decide to have the Three Kings go on horseback, and one group always places Mary, Joseph, the Babe, and the angel on a pick-up truck. Thus although there are similarities in each day's processional, variations on the themes are allowable and encouraged.

Currently two occasions are celebrated in the more traditional mode of cargo-taking; the festival for the Virgin of Guadalupe and that for Corpus Christi. The sponsorship of these fiestas fell into disuse some fifteen years ago when the priest forbade them, arguing that the expense was too great for the townsfolk; they have been revived during the past four years and involve an expense of some 3000 pesos (\$240.00, U.S.) for each mayordomo or sponsor. The

sponsors are selected by those of the previous year. When one speaks to men of the town, it is stated that there are two mayordomos for each fiesta; women claim there are four--two mayordomos and their wives, the mayordomas.

An examination of the celebration for the Virgin of Guadalupe will illustrate the important roles played by women in such events. The mayordomas are charged with organizing the processions, finding the cast for the acting-out of the Juan Diego story, and for the preparation of a meal at which the cargo is officially handed over to the next mayordomos. All recognize that, in order to even accept the cargo, a man must have a hard-working wife who will aid him in saving the necessary capital by raising domestic animals and practicing part-time economic specialties.

The Virgin of Guadalupe festival, honoring the appearance of Mexico's patron saint to the Indian, Juan Diego, is announced two weeks in advance by the procession of the "Three Marys" described in the chapter on adolescence; the mayordomas must select these girls.

At daybreak, on December eleventh, the church bells are rung, rockets are launched, and there are musicians. Each mayordoma invites relatives and comadres to help her prepare a breakfast for the musicians and guests invited by their husbands, including one of the mayordomos for the coming year. Although the most elaborate meal, at the handing over of the cargo, is held on the thirteenth, preparations are made from the eleventh on, in parallel activities in each of the mayordomas' houses. While the two mayordomos agree in the selection of the mayordomos for the coming year, each one is responsible for feting only one

of them. Thus while the two mayordomas together select the cast for the play, they do not prepare meals together.

On the evening of the eleventh, a mass is held in which little children are dressed as Indians. After the mass, the Juan Diego story is performed, thus ending the first day of the celebration.

On December twelfth, the women of the village meet at the church for the 6:00 a.m. mass; there they sing to the Virgin. After the mass a man carries the standard of the Virgin through the streets, followed by the band. The noon mass is again marked by the presence of "inditos" (little Indians). In late afternoon is the processional, with the standard of the Virgin, the local drum and bugle corps (made up of adolescent boys), and inditos. In the evening the women sing a rosary service and the Juan Diego story occurs again.

Meanwhile the mayordomas, apart from organizing the processions and working with the play group, have had little time for anything but the continuing preparations for the meal to be given on the thirteenth. Women participating are comadres, and the female relatives of both the mayordomo and the mayordoma, and many of them go two nights without sleep. The mayordoma directs the procedure, most often giving responsibility for various dishes to her own sisters and those of her husband. The size of the working group varies, ranging from as few as ten in the middle of the night, to a maximum of sixty or seventy women. Obviously the preparation of such a meal requires a great deal of cooperation.

Activity increases steadily until the morning of the thirteenth when it begins to reach its peak. Besides working on the meal, men and



women together prepare baskets full of large doughnut-shaped bread, called coronas or crowns. Tables must be set up for the ritual meal and candles are decorated to be given to the new mayordomos.

Around two o'clock, those gathered for the celebration eat first, finding places throughout the house. Around four, the band goes to the house of one of the current mayordomos and the men of the group, led by the band, head for the house of one of the new mayordomos. The new mayordomos have invited guests to accompany them to the church. Most of those who accompany the mayordomo and his wife to the church are females. At the church steps, the mayordomo and his wife are draped with a candy mancuerna, are given large decorated candles, and are crowned with large pieces of bread, similar in shape to those which will be given out later. After this ceremony, children start to chant, "bolo, bolo" and candy is thrown out to the crowd. Thus many elements of other religious rituals are simulated in this ceremony. The candy mancuerna is similar to that which is said to bind couples together in the marriage ceremony. Each year when a person completes the instruction given by the priest during the Lenten season, he asks someone to give him a candle and become his "godparent of the candle"; the candles given to the mayordomos can be compared with this. At baptisms a bolo of money is thrown out and the practice of throwing out candy is structurally similar. The only symbol left unexplained is that of the crowns of bread and no one in the community cares to speculate about its origin.

The crowning ceremony is one in which the mayordomos often appoint stand-ins, usually an adolescent daughter and son. The

ceremony is felt to lack dignidad (dignity) by some and they thus prefer not to participate in this aspect of the ritual.

After the crowning, the old mayordomo and his basically male entourage, and the new mayordomos (the man and his wife), with their preeminently female entourage, proceed to the departing mayordomo's house; the new mayordomos lead the way, followed by the band, and finally, by all others.

At the house, the new mayordomos are seated, along with the women who have come with them; any men who happen to have joined the group do not eat. The mayordomos are served first, then all of the women. No one partakes of the ritual meal, instead all of the women carry bowls and pots into which they put their food to be served to their families at home. In spite of this, all food is distributed in plates, as if it is going to be eaten on the spot. After the "meal" all of the bread contributed is brought out on planks of wood; these are presented to the wife of the mayordomo. Strings of candy, brooms, and decorated baskets, filled with bread, are also presented. Finally a small cut tree is brought out, to which have been tied baby chicks--to grow and be served at the next year's fiesta.

The wife of the mayordomo then presents these objects to the women she has invited; whoever accepts them must return double the following year. Thus if a woman accepts two baskets, she must return four; if she takes eight crowns of bread, she must return sixteen. The only exception is the brooms; in the past a woman who received a broom was obligated to sweep the church atrium and return a new broom the following year. This custom has fallen into disuse, although such a woman is still required to furnish a new broom during the coming year.

The women who attend the meal symbolizing the handing-over of the cargo are then obligated to help at the preparation of the meal for the coming year as well as returning all gifts doubly. The practice is analogous to the belief in Cajititlán that God rewards or punishes in double measure. A woman who was ill-behaved as a child will be liable to have two ill-behaved children. When a gift is given, the recipient generally states, "God will give you twice as much," and the Cajititlences actually believe this to be the case. The redistribution of these items and the double repayment indicate that those receiving and giving (that is, the new mayordomo's wife and the women she has invited to attend) are affirming that they have rights and duties, of a reciprocal nature, with one another.

Thus, several themes of the nature of religious participation of women become evident. They have specific duties in the household's relationship with the supernatural. Men have similar obligations to their fields, deciding when processions should be arranged and the like.

In public religious life, the man's role is more evident. It is his name that appears on the program for the fiesta of the Three Kings (a poster printed with the names of each participant), and men often speak of their activities in this fiesta. Men are also more publicly evident in the perpetuation of the more traditional mayordomía-cargo celebrations. When the group comes to the house, for the ritual meal, women become more dominant, thus emphasizing again the role of women within the household. So necessary is the woman in the cargo system that a man is required to be married in

order to be considered for a cargo. On the other hand, Cajititlán has a long tradition of women sometimes taking on the burden of a cargo. They, however, select themselves, for they do this as a fulfillment of a vow to a particular saint. Recently, a widow and her spinster daughter reinitiated the celebration of Corpus Christi; they made a promise to do this as a result of an illness suffered by the widow. This, however, represents an exception rather than the rule, for men do play more evident roles in the observation of religious festivals.

### Economic Roles

In this section we shall consider the economic roles played by married women, spinsters, and widows and will describe how the participation in the economic life of the household follows the life cycle.

A married woman, as a household head (as distinguished from a married woman who lives in the same household with her mother-in-law), is generally in control of the expenditure of the family's money. Data collected in a census of the town indicate that more than 80 per cent of the women manage the family's finances. A woman should thus be thrifty and always able to save some money, while still keeping the family supplied with the necessities of life. It is generally held by the Cajititlences that women know more about money than men. The only two moneylenders in town are women who charge 10 per cent interest per month. Even male informants agree that this is because women are very shrewd where money is concerned. A male informant opined that women also were the only ones who had "bad hearts" and

he could never charge that kind of interest because he has so many compadres. (It should be noted that these women are very marginal and respected only in terms of their ability to make money and, although elderly, are never addressed as "doña".)

As keeper of the family purse, a woman uses the money and comestibles provided by her husband. Most women, however, find ways to supplement the family's cash or goods' reserve. Approximately 43 per cent of women keep chickens both for family consumption and to sell. Pigs, considered an integral part of the economy, are raised by 55 per cent of the women. The fact that pigs can be sold from sucklings to mature animals figures greatly in a family's ability to meet emergencies. Ideally, of course, pigs are not sold until maturity, or, in the case of sows, after adding two litters to the family's supply. Yet pigs are viewed as banks--a source of ready cash if a necessity arises.

Pigs are generally fed corn raised in the husband's fields. No local attempt is made to compute the cost of feeding animals, of stud fees, or of loss by death, in order to determine the margin of profit. Varying figures, ranging from 1000 pesos to 1500 pesos (\$80 to \$120, U.S.), clear profit per pig seem possible.

Having an effective pig-raiser as a wife is considered a great economic asset. One woman was able to buy two houses in Guadalajara, at a total cost of 25,000 pesos (\$2,000, U.S.), solely by raising pigs. She and her husband lease these houses for forty dollars a month, thus increasing their income considerably.

The relative value of pig-raising compared to chicken-raising is evident to the Cajititlences. This can be inferred from the

proliferation of medications and treatments to prevent or cure porcine infirmities. The local nurse has been asked on several occasions to administer injections of penicillin to ailing pigs and midwives are often consulted if a sow has a difficult delivery. It will be recalled that d. Lidia knew how to cure her sick pigs as is the case with most women in town; specialists may be called upon, for while pig-raising is viewed as economically advantageous, their loss by death represents a great financial loss. On the other hand, no one would think of consulting such specialists for chickens, although they are sometimes given lemon and aspirin; chickens are a small investment and their loss is not as serious.

Women, also, seek other ways of adding income, and the vast majority have some specialty which can supplement, in some way, what their husbands provide. Some women keep this money separately, as well as money earned by animal husbandry, but most agree that this is a poor practice. Informants argue that such women would be wont to reproach their husbands, saying that they had purchased thus and so with their own money.

These various specialties range from making tortillas, sewing, or washing for others, to midwifery and money lending. The village stores are generally operated by women, and most women will occasionally sell sweets, fruit drinks, or a surplus of what their husbands' fields have produced. Other women massage, as did d. Lidia, or cure with herbs. Some buy clothing in Guadalajara and sell it, generally on credit, in the village; others reverse the process by buying fish and reselling them in Guadalajara. Several women are paid to lead novenas for families of the deceased.

Women seem tied to no clear-cut traditional patterns, as men are tied to their land, and attempt to maximize their economic potential, sometimes with abysmal results. During the Independence celebrations of 1971, a soccer tournament was held in the village. Four women of the town, apparently independently, conceived of the idea of setting up stands to sell sandwiches, tamales, beer, soft drinks, and the like at the soccer field. Since teams came from many surrounding villages and even Guadalajara, it was reasoned that they would have no food or drink. The stands were a tremendous success and were sold out within an hour. News spread around the community and, in 1972, no fewer than twenty stands were in operation. These proved more than the market could have borne anyway and the problem was compounded by the fact that crowds were considerably thinner than the year before due to a torrential rainfall the entire day. Most goods went unsold.

Although never discussed within the community, a judicious woman will sometimes earn more than her husband by keeping domestic animals and having an economic specialty. By very careful questioning, for example, it was learned that one man earned approximately 8500 pesos (\$700, U.S.), annually, while his wife contributed over 10,000 pesos (\$800, U.S.). In spite of this, there is a cultural ideal that a man should always mantener (support) his wife.

Supplementation of family income follows roughly the life cycle. If one excludes the keeping of domestic animals, women with children under five years of age are not likely to have a part-time economic specialty, with only about 10 per cent of these women engaged in such endeavors. This is, of course, explicable in terms of pre-occupation with small children. Approximately 30 per cent of women

with children under ten years of age engage in part-time specialties, while this figure becomes 70 per cent for women with children ten years of age or older; this latter figure also includes the aged and infirm who cannot work. The most puzzling aspect of the economic picture is the fact that of childless newlyweds, only one woman in four finds ways to supplement family income. It should also be mentioned that fewer newlyweds keep domestic animals. This is explained by the Cajititlences as "stupidity" on the part of the newly married girls; they do not recognize the need to help their husbands and, by the time they have children, they have no time. It is hypothesized that other factors are probably at work, too. Since the ability to support a wife is one of the most frequently expressed cultural ideals, it is logical to assume that a newly married man might insist upon such an arrangement or that a newly married woman might expect not to pursue part-time economic specialties. Closer examination of the data revealed a more important variable, mainly that the majority of newly married women who do not have part-time specialties are not household heads; that is, they still contribute their monies to the general fund held by their mother-in-law. Perhaps they are not willing to work without seeing the actual fruits of their labor.

Spinsters, who almost invariably live in some type of extended family relationship, are very active in the economic life of the community. All of them work, except for the infirm. Their activities include those carried on by married women except that they are unlikely to raise domestic animals. Unmarried adolescent girls often also contribute to the income of the family as did Rosi. In the age



group of fifteen through nineteen, 50 per cent of the girls contribute in some manner, if only in helping their mothers make tortillas for others. Sixty per cent of girls between twenty and twenty-four contribute, while 100 per cent of those twenty-five to twenty-nine are able to add to the larder. Some girls under fifteen years of age also run errands for others, help with household chores, and the like, for extra cash. The youngest girl is eleven years of age and in the group from eleven through fourteen, 20 per cent find ways to add income.

Widows comprise about 15 per cent of the adult female population; they often live with sons or daughters. Since they lack a husband, the economic life cycle of widows follows a different pattern than that of married women, since widows with small children are most likely to work; in fact, all widows with children under ten have some means of supporting their families. After their children are older, widows follow almost exactly the economic life cycle already described for married women.

It is here argued that the phases in the life cycle must be considered if one is to make a valid judgment about the participation of women in the economic sphere. If one ignores this scheme and simply computes the number of women, at any given time, engaged in economic endeavors, it does not appear that women are as economically active. Ignoring differences in marital status and phases in the life cycle would indicate that 55 per cent of all women do not have part-time specialties, when the keeping of domestic animals is excluded. If one were to examine only the married women it could be demonstrated that 65 per cent do not carry out such activities.

In summary, one can say that women contribute greatly to the household economies of Cajititlán. Married women and widows, especially, keep domestic animals, pigs being considered the "banks" of the community. Married women are more likely to have other specialties as their children grow older, while young widows follow the opposite pattern. All spinsters have some economic pursuit.

### Political Roles

It is still almost unthinkable that a woman would seek or accept a political post within the community. It should be recalled, in this context, that although women have many public religious roles, the majority of these roles center around the household. Political endeavors are exclusively public roles and women, in general, do not participate.

The following, condensed from field notes, should exemplify the idea that women are not considered potential political figures:

I was talking with don Goyo and doña Eugenia when d. Goyo started telling me that he and several other older men were planning to attempt to establish Cajititlán as a county seat. After extracting the details of this move, I asked him who would serve as municipal president; he replied that this had not been decided.

In order to gauge his reaction to a woman in power, I suggested that d. Cuca, the woman who reinitiated the Corpus celebration, might be a good choice. This was taken as quite funny by both d. Goyo and d. Eugenia who laughed about it for several minutes.

The Ministry of Public Health attempted to force the issue of the inclusion of women in the political sphere. In the Fall of 1971, several programs were initiated in an attempt to build storehouses at each rural health center to house the foodstuffs provided by the

government. The public health nurse made preparations for a junta (meeting) one evening which was to be led by an official of public health; she especially told all women in the Mother's Club to alert their husbands that they should attend. The results of this meeting are detailed below:

Rockets were fired to announce the meeting which was to begin at 8 P.M. At 8:35, there were but nine men present and the meeting was started; soon others wandered in, until there was a total of twenty-nine.

The public health official explained the purpose of the meeting, further pointed out that all men who helped in the construction of the storeroom would be paid in comestibles, and concluded that a committee should be elected to organize the construction. He suggested that a president, secretary, and treasurer be elected.

When he asked for nominations for president, d. José Morales suggested that the town mayor, who was not present, serve as president; all stated they were in agreement with this suggestion. Then he called for nominations for secretary; d. José said that the secretary should be the town secretary who is in charge of recording births and deaths. At this point, the man presiding gave an impassioned speech that sometimes women were more honorable in public service and that it might be a good idea to select a woman. There was silence for a moment and then d. José opined, "As I said, I think the secretary should be the delegation secretary." All said they were in agreement.

When it came time to elect a treasurer, d. Clifo suggested that a señorita might be a good choice; the representative of public health shot him a grateful look since he had discussed this very thing with d. Clifo earlier. Rafael put forth the name of the local nurse. She declined the nomination since she was studying in Guadalajara at the time, but suggested that Lupe Cárdenas, the wife of Cleto Rosales, might be a good choice. The public health official turned to Cleto and asked him if his wife could serve; when he nodded agreement, it was asked if the others were in agreement and they were.

The public health representative was dissatisfied with the attendance since, in order to petition materials from the government, fifty signatures were necessary. He attempted to cajole those present into signing the petition but the men of the town demurred since the mayor, the new president, was not in attendance; the petition went unsigned.

The petition was never signed, nor was the storeroom constructed.

In analyzing the role played by the public nurse, it becomes apparent that she exerted an influence in the meeting, especially since many of the men present were her compadres. Thus it is possible to envision increasing political power for women.

As indicated by the composite vignette of d. Lidia and Virginia, most women do not concern themselves with the political life of the community, except to gossip about the political leaders. Men often take conflicts to the mayor to be resolved, but women rarely do, usually practicing a more direct approach to conflict resolution. The varying modes of male and female conflict resolution will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

### Senescence and Death

In general, the older a woman is, the more likely she will be searched out to give advice. Adult offspring continue to consult with their mothers who also often offer gratuitous advice which is not, in general, resented by the offspring though it may be resented by the offspring's spouse. Particularly if the mother is dead, older aunts are often consulted. Although when a woman marries, she is said to belong to a "new family," her strongest affectational ties often remain with her own family, particularly her mother and her sisters; at the mother's death, sisters often become even closer. Thus, after the mother's death, the most likely relative to be asked for advice is a maternal aunt.

Although the wisdom of age is recognized within the community, not all older women are accorded the same respect, particularly those who have had illegitimate children. A woman who has no living children within the community to care for her is to be pitied, not respected. This is explained by the fact that she must depend on other relatives for her food, oftentimes, and has no offspring to do her bidding; the Cajititlences feel that such a life lacks dignity. Thus it is an unfortunate woman who does not have grateful children in her old age who will care for her. Such children are marks of success for elderly women.

As the successful elderly woman becomes increasingly feeble, attempts are made by her relatives to cajole her into working less. Since women usually outlive men, it falls to a woman's children to see that she gets good care in her old age. There is a belief, however, particularly among the elderly, that one should continue to work around the house if at all possible, since it is felt that such work keeps one from being a burden and from mental debilitation that is said to accompany the lack of work. Another emotional factor which might be in operation is that the elderly woman who continues to carry on household, religious, and economic duties becomes the center of much attention, with her younger relatives attempting to keep her from working while at the same time secretly admiring her ability to continue as always.

Older women do not avoid the topic of death in their conversations and very often talk about their coming wakes. Thus d. Carmela, an eighty-year-old, spoke of her impending demise, that was to come some three weeks later:

Death is a beautiful thing if one dies in Cajititlán. People come to visit me and we talk of old times; I have a chance to say my goodbyes to all my relatives and compadres. Then at the wake, all of my relatives, god-children, and compadres will attend. They say that one can still hear after death and I hope I will be able to hear what people have to say about me; for this reason, one should never talk ill of the dead.

I know that heaven must be a good place for no one ever comes back, except in dreams. And then they only return to tell us not to mourn too much. When my mother died, I cried all the time. She returned in a dream and tried to get me to go with her. I was very frightened and told her that if I accompanied her there would be no one to feed my father. I talked the dream over with my aunt and she told me that my mother would never do me harm and if she should return, I should go with her. A few nights later she came back and asked me to follow her to the mountains. We walked and walked, finally coming to a small house. Inside there were five babies, who I'm sure were my sisters and brothers who died in infancy; the house floor was full of water. My mother explained that this was now her work, caring for the infants. I asked about the water and she told me nothing. The next day I went to talk with my aunt again and she explained that the water was my tears and that my mother could not live happily as long as I continued to mourn her so heavily. After that I tried to have courage and my mother never returned.

Now I am very old and sick and will soon die. My children want to take me to Guadalajara today where they say I can get better care. I don't want to go because if I die there, none of my friends will attend the wake for it is difficult to remove a body from Guadalajara. They have promised me that when I am acabando [finishing or dying] they will bring me back to Cajititlán so I can die in my own bed and have a beautiful wake.

During a terminal illness, it is the responsibility of relatives and those tied to the sick person by compadrazgo relations to visit the infirm. Criticism is always expressed toward those who fail in this obligation. On the other hand, feelings of good will are engendered if a person not so related takes it upon himself to visit the sick person; this is taken to be a sacrifice or charitable act and one often

hears criticism and praise in the same statement, after a person's death. People will say, "Rosa visited my mother during her illness and no le llama nada ("she calls her nothing," literally, but figuratively meaning that she is not tied by kin nor fictive kin ties) while Esther, her niece, never visited once." It is important to note that women often represent families in these visitation efforts. While all offspring should visit personally, any more distant relatives often send only the woman of the house to visit both the male and female elderly; a visit from a nephew's wife, for example, is symbolic of a visit from the nephew himself.

As death approaches, domestic activity increases and the division of labor between males and females becomes more striking. More people visit the house, the women usually staying in the ill one's room, caring to his needs, and reciting rosaries. Men also visit, but usually just speak to the dying person, asking for a benediction. Close relatives of the dying community member wish to have the person's blessing before his death. Children are given the benediction by their parents whenever they leave the village, and, it will be recalled, also at marriage. In each case, the benediction is symbolic despedida or "good-bye."

After receiving the blessing, men tend to congregate in the patio, breezeway, or street, where they drink and chat. Women, who have remained at the bedside, continue to pray and to sprinkle holy water around the bed. As death approaches, the men are summoned and the litany is led by one of the women. The announcement of death is accompanied by near-hysteria on the part of women, while men, who are

sometimes drunk by this time, occasionally cry also; if men cry, they label themselves as cowards while other men attempt to comfort them by telling them that they are still machos.

At the moment of death, the immediate consideration is the preparation of the body for mourning and burial. The men leave immediately to allow the women to dress the body if the dead one is female; the opposite occurs if the body is male. A room is completely cleared of all furnishings by men and then swept and cleaned by women. As soon as this is completed, a female relative makes a cross of lime on the floor and the body is stretched out over the cross where it is to remain for a few minutes; this is said to be done to gain favor with God, although no one knows clearly why the practice occurs. After a time, the body is placed, by males, into the coffin, over the cross. Women usually place a container of vinegar and onion under the coffin so that no one will be taken sick by the "bad air" which is said to emanate from the body. Women also sprinkle holy water around the coffin.

As soon as these tasks are completed, usually within an hour of death, the windows of the room are opened so people of the town can witness, as they walk by the window, that a death has occurred. More people then flock to the house, bringing candles as evidence that they cared for the deceased; these candles will be burned for nine days following the burial and also will be used in the funeral procession. Every woman who attends the wake, and knows how to recite the rosary, will lead a rosary service, throughout the night of the wake. Other women, mainly, respond, while men usually gather outside of the room.



During the wake, female relatives of the deceased prepare coffee and serve this with animal crackers to the assembled guests. (Repeated questioning did not reveal the reason behind the use of animal crackers at wakes.) The kitchen is generally the domain of women and the most usual center of congregation for close female relatives; men wander in, usually to offer a bottle. In general they hand the bottle to the oldest women present and leave while she offers the tequila around. Women either drink from the bottle or spike their coffee. As has been mentioned earlier, alcoholic punch is the usual beverage for women on ritual occasions; during a wake, punch is never served and women partake of stronger alcoholic beverages. However, women are never the dueñas (owners) of the bottle and drink at the invitation of males.

Besides seeing that all guests are served coffee and crackers, women have other responsibilities during wakes and funerals. They must prepare meals for the men who dig the grave and then cover the coffin and must feed all those who attend the wake at any mealtime. Either men or women can arrange for the funeral mass.

During the procession to the church, women carry lighted candles while men carry the coffin or walk alongside. A woman is also hired to lead prayers at the graveside. Women predominate at the graveside itself, most of the men present concerned merely with the interment of the body. Men tuck bottles under their jackets and pass them around during the burial; women never partake of this since women very rarely drink in public places.

After the burial itself, almost all responsibility falls upon women. The funeral party returns to the deceased's house, where a

meal is served in honor of the grave diggers. During the next nine days, the room in which the deceased was left will not be disturbed and the lime cross and candles remain there. Each night women gather to recite the novena for the dead. Finally on the ninth day, the deceased closest female relative will sweep up the cross and keep the lime. Then all the women who have prayed during the nine days will proceed to the cemetery and bury the lime at the dead one's gravesite.

Although this rite signals the end of the funeral itself, and the room reverts to its original purpose, it is up to women to keep mourning by wearing black dresses and refraining from dancing. Mourning usually lasts anywhere from three months to a year, depending on the closeness of the dead relative. Men, on the other hand, do not keep a formal mourning. It is also up to women to arrange for masses for the dead and to remember to light candles on the Day of the Dead.

Death often carries with it emotional and economic connotations. Offspring generally bemoan the death of their mother, particularly, and, as was mentioned previously, may turn to an aunt for guidance and advice. Yet perhaps the greatest change can be expected by a daughter-in-law in the case of her mother-in-law's death. Even if it is the case that they do not live in the same house or live in the same house with different kitchens, daughters-in-law may still resent the presence of the mother-in-law since their husbands may continue to be swayed by the influences of their mothers. The death of the mother-in-law often clears the way for the now older daughter-in-law

to become a true household head, and to establish a family arrangement much like that of her mother-in-law. This is particularly the case when the couple has continued to live in his natal household. The household is now freed for her own sons who may bring their wives to live there, thus reinitiating the familial cycle. The daughter-in-law's power is thus increased significantly by the death of her mother-in-law.

We have seen that women are charged with significant responsibilities during illnesses and deaths. They must care for the sick one, visit him, take on specific charges during wakes and funerals, and show their devotion to the deceased by keeping mourning. Finally we have seen that, in the case of the death of one's mother-in-law, significant changes can take place in the life of a woman.

### Summary

In this chapter we have examined the most traditional roles carried out by women in peasant society, those of wife and mother. We have also seen, however, that women have economic and religious roles also related to the household. It has been shown, moreover, that other categories of women also have economic and religious roles which function for community well-being. Female responsibility at death and the change death affects in relationships were analyzed in the final section.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Cajititlences agree that, at thirty, a woman's chances of marrying are slight; thus in computing the percentage of spinsters, only women thirty years of age or older were included in the calculation.

## CHAPTER SIX

### SITUATIONAL IDEALS OF BEHAVIOR AND INTERACTIONAL REALITIES

In the preceding chapters, the major focus has been upon the varying roles which are available to women in a peasant community in Mexico. In this final chapter, these roles will be reanalyzed in terms of different variables, called by Chapple (1970:272) "interactional realities." To this end, the first section will be devoted to the achievement of full social adulthood within the community of Cajititlán; this will represent a summary of the roles already described, placed in a schematic model. Then attention will be focused upon events such as baptisms, marriages, and cargos, in an attempt to illuminate varying organizational principles within the community; basic interactional realities will then be elucidated. Finally, an analysis of varying ideals of behavior, dependent upon situations and the sex of the informant, will be undertaken.

#### Coming of Age

Moore (1973:2) has recently pointed out that "the individual comes of age many times during his lifetime." In this section we shall examine the modes in which women become adults within the community, including rites and periods within the life cycle which mark these changes.

Although childhood is recognized to last from birth until about fifteen years of age, several events and ages during childhood are

recognized as critical by the Cajititlences. Before baptism, a child is usually nameless and referred to merely as "baby." Thus baptism is a formal naming ceremony and the child, symbolically, is given an identity of his own. During the first few years of his life he will be treated as a child but with some distinction made to his gender, particularly in the areas of dress and modesty. At around four years of age, striking differences between the treatment of male and female children come into play. Girls begin to accept responsibility within the household, running errands and doing chores. Boys play, mainly with older female siblings, and remain more tied to the household, waiting for acceptance into the play groups of street boys. During this time the boy will tentatively venture out, only to be rebuffed by older boys. Around seven to eight years of age, the first communion is made, indicating that children will now have responsibilities to the religious community. Both boys and girls serve an apprenticeship in the adult female aspect of community involvement, having parts to play in female-sponsored religious rites. At about this same time, both males and females enter school and participate in community dances and presentations which are again organized by, and mainly attended by, females.

The age of ten brings with it a reversal of that which has gone before. Girls, who were previously allowed to wander around town after dark, are brought back into the household, and tighter restrictions are placed upon them. Boys, on the other hand, begin to identify with the male segment of the community, sitting on the men's side of the church. In this same context, they now join others

as full-time members of the boys' street community, spending much time away from the home.

For girls, the age of fifteen signals availability for courtship. This is formally recognized in the rite of the fifteenth birthday celebration or the sixth-grade graduation which occurs more or less at the same time. The fact that the fifteenth birthday celebration mirrors structurally the wedding ceremony can be no accident. At this age, which also more or less coincides with the onset of menses, girls find that more cultural material is available to them as they learn about the "secrets" of menstruation. They are further charged with more economic responsibility to the household and many seek, or are encouraged to find, ways to supplement the family's income. Young women of this age also enter into the community arena more fully, with responsibilities--such as being the queen of the Independence Day celebration or taking the part of the Virgin of Guadalupe--to the religious and political aspects of the community. They also develop skills in the manipulation of men through the courtship process.

At marriage, and the generally early pregnancy, another stage in adulthood is reached. Not only does the young woman leave her natal household but she is allowed and encouraged to discuss and ask questions about pregnancy and sexual behavior; the full inventory of "women's culture" is thus open to her, especially after giving birth to her first child.

The birth of the first child, moreover, usually carries with it important economic ramifications and a young woman may become an

economic adult. That is, there is a tendency to create a separate household, either by forming a separate kitchen or by moving to a new house site. The woman, then, becomes the keeper of the family's money and is quite likely to start raising domestic animals in order to increase the family income. A young woman with small children is more likely to be tied to the care of her children and to eschew the taking on of any other part-time economic enterprises. As her children grow older, she will become more and more likely to find other means of contributing to the household economy. She will have definite roles to play in the religious aspects of the household and the community.

As long as her mother-in-law continues to live, and, more especially if she continues to live in her mother-in-law's house under any circumstance, the young woman is still subordinate to another female within the community. Thus there is a sense in which full social adulthood is not at its acme until the woman becomes the mater familias, or the oldest woman, within the household. When her sons have taken wives, who are under her control and domination, the woman, as a household head, comes into her own and is searched out for advice and counsel by her now married daughters and sons. She continues into old age as the most respected member of the family, and her children continually reward her for the "suffering" she has endured in their rearing.

We have seen, however, that sometimes this process is short-circuited when the woman never marries. Spinsters are barred from participation in varying religious conferences reserved for married



women, do not become household heads, and continue to interact with adolescent girls in the Catholic Action Group, sometimes even taking parts generally reserved for adolescents, such as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe. Spinsters, who are not adults within their own households, are sought out as comadres and godmothers; they thus gain respect and prestige through the number of godchildren they have. Because of their often public economic roles, spinsters are likewise often privy to a great deal of gossip and are thus searched out as gossip-mongers.

The usual scheme for achieving adulthood is also short-circuited to some degree in other cases. Young widows find that they must enter into the part-time economic specialty sphere at an earlier age in order to support their children. An older woman with no children of her own, or children who have moved away, cannot assume the mantle of dominant woman and must live through the charity of her relatives; she, in this role, is the object of pity and is felt to have failed as a woman.

In summary, we have seen that the process of maturation involves changes in economic activities, physiological phenomena, and the acquisition of the full feminine cultural inventory. In ascribing adulthood status, one must invariably take into account the generation above and below the woman in question. Important factors include those of whether or not the woman has children and whether she is still under the domination of a mother-in-law. Her formal marital status must also be considered for, although a woman may be an economic, physiological, and knowledgeable adult, she may not be accorded respect in her older years if she is not married in the church. Thus women in Cajititlán pass through various stages in becoming adults.

### Event Analyses

Arensberg and Kimball (1965:281-289) have suggested the use of the event analysis as a tool in the study of communities. In the foregoing chapters, several events, such as baptisms and wakes, have been described and it is possible to extrapolate several organizational principles from these events.

By far the most commonly heard saying within the community of Cajititlán is "los hombres con los hombres y las mujeres con las mujeres" ("men with men and women with women"). In looking at all ritual events, it becomes clear that this saying is usually representative of reality. When people gather into groups, women generally gather with women, while men congregate with other men. This separation can be seen in the church, with a male and female side; in other ritual occasions, with women gathering in the kitchen and men gathering in the street, and in the centers of congregation of males in contradistinction to females. Within the community, males tend to congregate in the saloons, the plaza (except on Sunday evenings when the plaza is given over to courting adolescents), and in stores. Women, on the other hand, congregate in other places. The stores are centers of congregation, for women, during the day, while they serve the same function for men after dark. Women also congregate at the lakeshore, where clothes are washed and gossip is passed, and in the health center. Thus, outside of one's family and immediate household, more interaction takes place with one's own sex than with the opposite sex.

Lewis (1951:428-429), Foster (1967:91), Lopreato (1962:21-24), the Reichel-Dolmatoffs (1961:258), Hickey (1964:279-280), Banfield

(1958:101) and others have argued that lack of cooperation is a major characteristic of peasant society and culture. Several events show that women, in Cajititlán, are always charged, in the division of labor, with the preparation of ritual meals honoring compadres, the bride's family, the incoming mayordomos, and those in charge of digging graves; the extreme degree of cooperation and coordination necessary to prepare and serve these meals should be pointed out. The woman in charge becomes the pivotal point in her kindred and those who help in these ventures are both her own relatives and those of her husband. Thus the women who cooperate may not be tied by any other link than by some relationship to the woman in charge; for example, a woman's sister is not related by kinship to that same woman's husband's sister. In these cases, then, cooperation extends beyond the family and often reaches into all corners of the community itself. Even in the case of the groups of men who sponsor each fiesta day, such cooperation among men is not as evident. The man in charge simply collects money and purchases the necessary items, often calling upon his male relatives, thus delegating responsibility to them. It should also be strongly averred that men have relatively fewer opportunities to cooperate and are not called upon to do so on many occasions; this might partially explain why the storeroom, discussed in the section on political power, was never built, and might further illuminate the public health official's insistence upon the selection of a woman to the committee. It is here suggested that a committee made up entirely of women might have been successful in seeing that the

storeroom was built through cajoling their husbands and kinsmen to construct it. This is postulated because of the ability that women demonstrate in cooperation in finding casts for processions, preparing ritual meals, and in the delegation of responsibilities within the Mother's Club.

Thus, it has been demonstrated that through the analysis of events within the community in each case there is a definite division of labor, with men taking certain roles and women playing others. This division can be seen in terms, also, of sexual segregation during the event itself. Finally, the traditional division of labor generally requires a great deal of cooperation for a large number of women that extends beyond the family.

### Interactional Realities

In most general ethnographies, the roles of women have been described merely in terms of the division of labor and an "ideal" stereotype of women. One of the most frequent assertions has been the dominance of men over women in all save the mother-son dyad. Little attention has been focused upon interactional realities of women with other women and of women with men.

As has been previously pointed out, the interactional qualities between husbands and wives differ sharply depending upon the public or private nature of the interaction. This distinction is not so finely drawn in women's interactions with other men within the community. No man has the right to require services from any women other than his wife or daughter; sons may make requests, but cannot require compliance. A woman, particularly in interaction with younger

male relatives--sons, nephews, sons-in-law, etc.--is often the dominant member of the dyad, channeling conversation, giving advice, and actively participating in the solution of problems. The respected woman is also one who can hold her own in any joking relationship with both related males, and more particularly, with non-related males. In this manner she can preserve her honor and that of her husband, thus avoiding a confrontation between males. This aspect of male-female relationships will be discussed more fully in the ensuing section. Although sexual division is a common index of dominance, age actually takes precedence in most interactions between women and men. A younger man should always be precavido (circumspect) with an older woman (if she is not a prostitute or some other non-respected member of the community) and he will take pains not to offend her in any way.

Although much has been related about the interactions of women with other women, particularly in the continuing socialization process, further mention should be made of this phenomenon. Among related females, age again takes precedence and older women often give advice to younger women; this is also the case, although to a lesser extent, with non-related females. However, as is common with adolescent girls, adult women are known to fight with each other. As adolescents, no two related girls will become the novias of the same man; this is said to avoid difficulties between relatives. Adult women also attempt to avoid fight confrontations with female relatives and most fights occur between those who are not so related. The causes for these fights are varied. It is not uncommon, for example, for two women to start fighting when their young sons have

an altercation with each other. If a fist fight erupts in the streets, the mothers are always called. Sometimes they will merely stop the fight but on other occasions, particularly if there is ill will between the families, they might start to encourage their sons, verbally, to fight. This often degenerates into a free-for-all involving the two mothers. Others have been known to fight those who initiate gossip about them, or their families. In one such case, a woman started a rumor that a young girl in town was pregnant. After the rumor gained some circulation, the girl's mother confronted the woman in a local store and a fist fight erupted. Examples of such fighting are numerous but it should be noted that fighting, in general, is disapproved. The majority of women explain the incidence of such fights as due to types of women or of personal characteristics.

Although dominance by the male sex has been generally accepted in the literature, age as an organizational principle is a more common interactional reality. Younger women are also more likely to defer to the superior knowledge of an older woman, although this seems more developed in the case with females related through kin and fictive kin ties. Except in the cases of husband-wife relationships and father-daughter relationships, little deference is shown by women in public to males, except for a cross-sexual, overt deference to the priest. Women do, however, generally show respect for, and deference to, older men, thus reemphasizing the importance of respect for the elderly within the community.

### Tímidas Versus Gallonas

Ethnographies generally describe the behavior of rural Latin American women in terms of the ideals of passivity and self-abnegation. As has been shown, behavior often diverges from these ideals. We have examined the dominance of older sisters over younger brothers, female domination in the courtship process, the woman as the household head, the control of mothers over sons, and the lack of such patterns in interaction between males and females, in public, with the exception of the husband-wife and older man-younger woman dyads. Although women may pay lip service to the superiority of males, their actual beliefs often clearly diverge from this ideal. Simply explaining feminine behavior in terms of divergence from ideals, as Foster (1967:59) and Lewis (1951:319) have done, is to present an oversimplification of the question of stereotyping and ideal behavior. There are actually varying ideals of female behavior depending on two main factors: the sex of the informant and the situation.

My data suggest a continuum of women's behavior and status personality, defined by Linton (1945:130) as "status-linked response configurations... [which] differ from the basic personality type in being heavily weighted on the side of specific overt responses." This ethno-personality scheme ranges women from one extreme, called by the Cajititlences "las tímidas" (the timid ones) to the other extreme, called "las gallonas" (the female roosters). The tímidas live up to the ideal behavior standards as reported in traditional ethnographies; they are passive and self-denying. The gallonas, on the other hand, are aggressive and reminiscent of the women who fought

in the Mexican revolutions. Such women are folk heroines in Mexico and are popularized by María Felix, an actress who often plays gallona roles in Mexican movies.

Let us first examine the preferences between these two stereotyped extremes as expressed by men and women. Men feel that timid women might prove to be humble and self-effacing wives. However, even men express some doubt about the advisability of marrying an extremely passive woman. It is thought that such a woman might be unable to effectively handle the family's money, since timidity is often equated with stupidity. More important is the fear that such a passive woman might fall easy prey to the sexual wooings of another man.

Women actually fear excessively timid women. It will be recalled that fights between women are not rare occurrences. Female informants agree that women who fight are almost exclusively from the ranks of the timid ones; that is, timid women are usually only timid in terms of their relationships with men, being more aggressive with women, and likely to start verbal or physical fights.

Women further aver that timidity is the cause of unfortunate decisions. The timid woman, they argue, is so afraid of confrontations with men that she cannot make decisions. If her husband or children become ill, she will not call a doctor; if no food is available she fears asking for credit. Thus, the timid woman cannot live up to her responsibilities as wife and mother.

When Soledad Lopez left her husband and seven children ranging in age from thirteen to less than a year, women in the town explained



this in terms of her excessive timidity. Her husband was rabidly jealous, and when she could stand this no longer, she left. Others within the community criticized her, not only in terms of her avoidance of her motherly duties, but because she was too timid to take her husband to task. They also insisted that if Soledad had not been a tímida, and the home situation became unbearable, she would have taken her children with her. In her cowardice, she feared that she would be unable to support her children, and thus left them with their father. As one informant put it, "this is another reason I don't like tímidas. A woman can become a bad mother simply out of fear."

On the other hand, gallonas are admired for their ability to take care of themselves. For example, a man who was reading about the exploits of Gertrudís Bocanegra, a heroine of the War of Independence, concluded his reading with the expression, " Qué gallona!" Yet the extreme development of this personality type is also feared, mainly because it is assumed that such a woman might become very sexually free and hombrada (man-like). Both men and women indicate disdain for the sexual freedom and public drunkenness often attributed to this type of woman.

The ambivalence expressed by informants regarding both tímidas and gallonas can be explained in terms of varying ideals of female behavior, here termed "situational ideals." For example, a man expects his wife to ward off any verbal attacks upon herself since this is a reflection upon his own manhood. She should be able to keep men from entering her house when her husband is not at home.

One male informant stressed the fact that a single woman must be a gallona in a certain respect; that is, she must protect her own honor and that of her family.

Women also see this necessity since they know that while women and girls may have hair-pulling, fist-throwing fights, any altercation between men might result in homicide, and if they can handle such a situation, men will not have to enter in.

As has been pointed out by Foster (1967:172) and others, men tend to avoid face-to-face confrontations, because they, too, are aware of the inherent dangers. Women are much less likely to shun such face-to-face meetings. This can definitely be seen in non-violent conflict resolution within the community. Women tend to confront the guilty party personally, especially in an effort to protect female relatives. It will be recalled that sisters may criticize their brothers-in-law when they feel that they are not living up to their responsibilities; such was the case in the anecdote relating a difficult childbirth in which the sister confronted her brother-in-law for not calling a doctor. Women are also likely to be called when a man becomes drunk and abusive towards his wife and they will confront him. Women see this protection as necessary particularly if the woman is a tímida and thus cannot take care of herself.

Men also attempt to protect female relatives who are tímidas. Their mode of protection is different, however, for they use intermediaries, thus avoiding possible bloodshed. Informants agree that if a woman is available, she is the better choice. If this is not the case, men employ the following strategy. The concerned male

speaks with one of his compadres who, at least technically, cannot turn down the request of a favor. He asks his compadre to speak with the town mayor who then handles the situation, fining the guilty man. If for no other reason than the economics involved, this is considered a poor solution for the woman is also made to suffer through the fining of her husband.

Women also believe that they should help protect their menfolk--husbands, brothers, sons, and fathers. This is certainly related to the cult of masculinity since a man expects himself to seek vengeance for insults against himself or his woman. Women often serve as intermediaries to either avoid or short-circuit trouble. As mentioned, women fetch their drunken sons home and this is an example of premeditated avoidance of difficulties between men. On the other hand, women often literally step between two men at the onset of a quarrel; they are known, frequently, to verbally attack would-be assassins, or to actually take knives or guns away from them. The woman risks little in this respect since it is assumed that no man would kill a woman. In one such case when a would-be attacker threatened to kill a woman she told him to do so, saying that then everyone would know what a coward he really was. This woman was one of the most respected community members and also appeared to be quite passive, publicly, in her dealings with her husband. Perhaps one of the most ironic protections of a male's honor occurred during 1972. A fifteen-year-old boy was being taunted by a group of girls who, seeing him on the street, would yell "joto, joto" ("queer, queer") at him. The boy's sisters banded together

to physically attack these girls. They later explained that while Roberto could never fight with a woman, they could and would.

Such situational behavior occurs with great frequency within the community and is certainly recognized by both men and women within the village. To be respected, a woman must learn in which situations she should be passive, such as public subservience to her husband, and when she should intermeddle between men in order to avoid violence or loss of respect.

Thus, ideals of behavior vary according to the sex of the informant, but, most importantly, according to the situation. While machismo may serve as a model of male behavior in most, if not all, situations, women cannot be understood, even in ideal terms, without considering the situational variables.

### Summary

In this chapter the roles and coming of age of women have been summarized. In addition, we have further considered events that demonstrate that sexual segregation is a common practice within the community and that women must learn patterns of cooperation in order to fulfill their ritual obligations. It has also been shown that women do not necessarily take passive roles in public interactions with males other than their husbands.

Finally, we have seen that feminine behavior diverges from ideals promulgated in much anthropological literature. Instead of explaining such behavior as role dissonance, it has here been demonstrated that some deviations from the passivity ideal are culturally patterned and expected, and that women, while outwardly and publicly appearing submissive and passive, are not necessarily so.

## EPILOGUE

This study was originally intended as a description of female culture in a rural peasant village with a concern for deviance from the stereotypic ideals of Mexican female behavior. Although divergence from ideal behavior has been cited in the anthropological literature and in this study, the degree to which the continuum of female behavior diverged so radically was not expected. Significantly, most of this divergence is patterned; such behavior represents cultural responses to a variety of situations and we have seen that situational aggressive behavior by women is expected and can, therefore, not be termed "deviant." The traditional stereotype simply does not represent reality.

This study was not intended to correct previous ethnographic impressions but to supplement and reinterpret data of a sort not discernible to male observers. Further, by placing emphasis upon the female half of the peasant universe, observations could be made that would have been difficult in the context of traditional community studies with their supposedly balanced treatment of all areas of culture and structure.

Although the conclusions reached herein are based upon data from one highland Mexican village, these data challenge suppositions of ideal female behavior and demonstrate that some reputed characteristics of peasant society and culture--shunning of cooperative ventures and

avoiding face-to-face confrontations--while valid for men, are not characteristic of women. Thus, anthropological theories of peasant social organization might be reevaluated, giving emphasis not only to male, but to female, behavior.

Finally, it is hoped that other female anthropologists will be stimulated to formulate research projects to examine other peasant societies. If the present study has but a heuristic value in opening new avenues of research interest, it has succeeded. The roles of women, their goals, and their cultural strengths must be understood if the "study of man" is to be our work.

## GLOSSARY

- ABRAZO: an embrace. More specifically this term refers to the embrace between compadres, asking forgiveness for any offenses and pledging allegiance. It is said that if such an embrace is not executed, the compadre will return after death to collect the still due embrace.
- AIRE: literally "air" but sometimes also called "bad air." Aire is said to cause illness.
- ANGELITO: literally "little angel." The term refers to anyone who dies as an innocent. Unlike other areas, in Cajititlán, anyone who never marries nor has no known sexual contact is buried as an angelito.
- ARRAS: gold coins. Given to a couple at marriage, supposedly to insure against poverty. They cannot be spent since they are blessed by a priest.
- AVECINDADA, XX -0: A person who is a non-native of the community. The term carried with it a connotation of impermanence although it may refer to a person spending a few months or to inhabitants of some fifty or sixty years.
- CARGO: literally "burden." This term usually refers to the responsibility of sponsoring a religious fiesta.
- COHETES: firework rockets used in religious celebrations, to signal meetings, to call the groom's female relatives to the bride's house, to open the heavens for angelitos, and for other ceremonial occasions.
- CATRIN, CATRINA, CATRINES: These terms refer to items from the urban areas, particularly in the matter of dress.
- COSTUMBRE, LA: a term that is used for customs or customary behavior but is also employed for menstruation.
- D.: the abbreviation for "don" or "doña." The abbreviation is capitalized only as the first word of a sentence.
- DOCTRINA: literally "doctrine," but used specifically to refer to catechism classes.

- DON, DOÑA: respect terms for older people within the village, always coupled with the Christian name, rather than the surname.
- DONSHIP: an Anglicanized word referring to the system of ascribing prestige through the use of the honorifics "don" and "doña."
- ENTUERTOS: pains after childbirth, generally associated with some culturally defined error in post-natal care.
- INDITOS: literally "little Indians" but usually refers to the practice of dressing children as Indians during the celebration for the Virgin of Guadalupe.
- GALLONA: literally "large female rooster," but figuratively applied to women who are aggressive and man-like.
- MACHISMO: the cult of masculinity.
- MANCUERNA: a lasso of flowers placed around the bride and groom during the wedding mass, symbolizing their union. A modified version, made of candy, is also used during the changeover of a religious cargo.
- MASA: nixtamal ground into a thick corn dough.
- MAYORDOMIA-CARGO: a general term used to refer to sponsorship of religious festivals.
- NIXTAMAL: corn soaked overnight in lime and water as a stage in the preparation of tortillas. Nixtamal is also used for curing pottery cookware.
- PETATE: a straw mat, woven from reeds, approximately five by seven feet in size.
- QUINCEAÑERA: a fifteen year old girl. The term is employed, generally only on the girl's birthday when she is the honored personage at a party.
- REBOZO: a long shawl, worn with one end over the left shoulder.
- SEÑORITA: an unmarried female of fifteen years of age, or older. Can also refer, euphemistically, to a virgin or to females who have reached menses. The term is also used for address and reference to schoolteachers, regardless of their marital status.
- SEVILLANA: a lace mantilla, worn as a headcovering for masses and wakes; usually worn by younger women. The term "mantilla" is employed, locally, for diapers.
- SUSTO: a fright, usually resulting in illness.
- TÍMIDA: timid woman.



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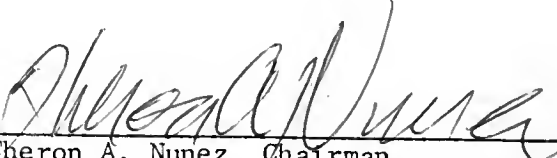
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### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

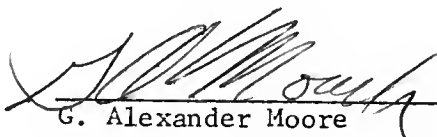
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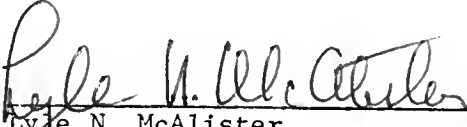
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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